

# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

*Philologos Religious Online Books*  
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Mr. Pink had a monthly publication for over 30 years (1922-1953). Most of the articles in those papers were gathered and put into book form and can be found elsewhere on the net (i.e. [pbministries.org](http://pbministries.org), etc.). These are some of the smaller articles that may have fallen through the cracks. [Mount Zion](#) is reproducing the issues from late 1932 through 1953 and distributing them on their mailing list. All these articles on this website have been taken from those files.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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January, 1934

### The Law and a Christian

The law was given *twice* upon Mount Sinai, but the appearance of the Lord, when He gave it the second time, was wonderfully different from that of His, when at first He delivered it to Israel.

1. When He gave it the first time, He caused His terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul, and the dismaying of Israel. But when He gave it the second time, He caused all His goodness to pass before Moses, to the comfort of his conscience, and the bowing of his heart.
2. When He gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet. But when He gave it the second time, it was a proclamation of His name to be merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions and sins.
3. When He gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly to fear and quake. But when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a cleft of the rock.
4. From all which I gather, that, though as to the *matter* of the law, both as to its being given the first time, and the second, it binds the unbeliever, under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith); yet as to the *manner* of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its

force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus; but this second time (at least in the manner of its being given) not respecting such a covenant, but rather as *a rule or directory*, to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ; for the saint himself, though he be without law to God, as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to Him as considered under grace, nor without law to God, but under the law to Christ.

5. Though therefore it be sad with the unbeliever, because he only and wholly standeth under the law as it is given in fire, in smoke, in blackness and darkness, and thunder, all which threatening him with eternal ruin if he fulfill not the utmost tittle thereof; yet the believer stands to the law under no such consideration, neither is he so at all to hear or regard it; for he is now removed from thence to the blessed mountain of Zion, to grace and forgiveness of sins; he is now, I say, by faith in the Lord Jesus, shrouded under so perfect and blessed a righteousness, that this thundering law of Mount Sinai cannot find the least fault or diminution therein, but rather approveth and alloweth thereof, either when or wherever it find it. This is called the righteousness of God without the law, and is also said to be witnessed by both the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe, for there is no difference.

6. Wherefore, whenever thou who believest in Jesus doth hear the law in its thundering and lightening fits, as if it would burn up Heaven and earth, then say thou, I am free from this law, these thunderings have nothing to do with my soul; nay, even this law, while it thus thundereth and roareth, it doth both allow and approve of my righteousness. I know that Hagar would sometimes be domineering and high even in Sarah's house, and against her; but this she is not to be suffered to do, nay, though Sarah herself be barren; wherefore serve it also as Sarah served her, and expel her out of thy house. My meaning is, when this law with its thunderings and threatenings doth attempt to lay hold on thy conscience, shut it out with a promise of grace; cry, The inn is taken up already, the Lord Jesus is here entertained, and here is no room for the law. Indeed if it will be content with being my informer, and so lovingly leave off to judge me, I will be content, it shall be my sight, I will also delight therein; but, otherwise, I being now made upright without, and that too with that righteousness which this law speaks well of and approveth, I may not, will not, cannot, dare not, make it my saviour and judge, nor suffer it to set up its government in my conscience; for by so doing I fall from grace, and Jesus Christ doth profit me nothing.

7. Thus, therefore, the soul that is married to Him that is raised up from the dead, both may and ought to deal with this law of God; yea, it doth greatly dishonour its Lord, and refuse its Gospel privileges, if at any time it otherwise doth whatever it seeth or feels. The law hath power over the wife so long as her husband liveth, but if her husband be dead she is freed from that law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she be married to another man. Indeed, so long as thou art alive to sin, and to thy righteousness, which is of the law, so long thou hast them for thy husband, and they must reign over thee. But when once they are become dead unto thee, as they then most certainly will, when thou closest with the Lord Jesus Christ; then, I say, thy former husbands have no more to meddle with thee, thou are freed from their law. Set the case of a woman being cast into prison for a debt of one hundred pounds; if after this, she marry, yea, though while she is in the jailer's hand, in the same day that she is joined to her husband, her debt is all become his; yea, and the law also, that arrested and imprisoned this woman, as freely tells her, Go; and she is freed, saith Paul, from that. The sum, then, of what hath been said is this: The Christian hath now

nothing to do with the law *as it thundereth* and burneth on Sinai, or as it bindeth the conscience *to wrath* and the displeasure of God for sin, for, from its *thus* appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet *it is to have regard thereto* and to count it holy, just, and good, which, that it may do, it is always, when it seeth or regards it, to remember that He who giveth it to us is “merciful, gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth.”—John Bunyan, 1660.

We earnestly commend this brief article to the thoughtful attention of each reader. It not only illustrates what was the uniform teaching of the Puritans on this important subject—from which our moderns have so deplorably departed; but it also calls attention to a vitally important distinction. The twofold giving of the Law by God *to His people*, adumbrated His giving it to them first *in Adam*, when its fearful threat, “In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shall surely die” was suspended over them—symbolized by the thunders and lightnings at Sinai. And second, it being given to them *in Christ*, who now administers it faithfully and righteously, as the gracious and merciful Mediator.—A.W.P.

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January, 1934

### God's Jewels

“And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels” (Mal. 3:17). To whom is God here referring? who are the favoured ones whom He terms His “jewels”? The previous verse tells us, “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon His name.” A twofold description is there given by which the people of God may be identified: they have a reverential awe and profound respect of God's majesty and authority; they have a deep love and adoration for Him—evidenced by their thinking upon His name.

It almost surprises one to learn that the great and self-sufficient God has “jewels,” but our surprise increases to astonishment when we learn that these “jewels” are living creatures, and astonishment gives place to overwhelming amazement when we discover that these living creatures are fallen and depraved sinners redeemed from among the children of men. Truly, naught but Divine grace would ever liken such wretched worms of the dust unto precious stones. Yet that is the very thing which we find God doing in our text. It is not the unfallen angels, nor the holy seraphim and exalted cherubims who are spoken of as Jehovah's valued treasure, but lost and ruined sinners saved by amazing grace. Saints are likened unto wheat, fishes, trees, stars, but here to “jewels”; the figure is a deeply interesting and instructive one.

In Isaiah 55:8-9 we read, “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.” This is seen in the difference between human and Divine estimates of relative values. The world's standard of worth is very different from that of God's. Who are the immortals of human history? Caesar, Charlemagne, Napoleon: soldiers and warriors. Among statesmen and politicians we may mention Gladstone and Lincoln: among dramatists, Goethe and Shakespeare. Those were great in the eyes of earth; but who were great in the eyes of Heaven? For the most part they were unknown down here. They were humble and lowly, insignificant in the affairs of the world. Their names were never chronicled among men; *but they were written in the Lamb's Book of Life!*

It is noteworthy that our text is found in the book of Malachi, the last book of the Old Testament, which corresponds in many respects with the character of our days, as we seem to be nearing the end of the New Testament era. As the late C. H. Spurgeon pointed out, “These words were spoken in a very graceless age, when religion was peculiarly distasteful to men; when they scoffed at God's altar, and said of His service, 'What a weariness it is!' and scornfully asked, 'What profit is it that we have kept His ordinance'? Yet even those dark nights were not uncheered by bright stars. Though the house of national worship was often deserted, there were secret conventicles of those who 'feared the Lord,' and who 'spake often one to another,' and our God, who regards quality more than quantity, had respect to these elect twos and threes. He 'hearkened and heard,' and so approved of that which He heard that He takes notes of it, and declared that He will publish it. 'A book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name!' Yea, and He valued so much these hidden ones that He called them His 'jewels,' and declared in the great day when He should gather together His retinue, His regalia, the peculiar treasure of kings, He would look upon these hidden ones as being more priceless than emeralds, rubies, or pearls.”

So it is now when all corporate testimony has broken down, when Christendom is in spiritual ruins. Many of God's dear children no longer have the privilege of church fellowship, for they dare not attend the modern “synagogues of Satan.” But some of them still have the joy of meeting with little groups of fellow pilgrims, seeking to strengthen one another's hands as they journey through this wilderness scene. But there are others of God's “scattered” (John 11:52) saints, who are cut off from practically all (*real* Christian fellowship), isolated ones, who have to mourn with David, “I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top” (Psa. 102:7). Yet, though they can no longer “speak often one to another,” they still have the holy and blessed privilege of *thinking upon* that Name which is above every name. These, too, shall be numbered among His precious treasure in the day when He shall “make up” His “jewels.”

Let us now endeavour to ponder this beautiful figure, and reverently enquire why the Lord has likened His people to “jewels.” 1. *Because of their inestimable value in His sight.* This is an exceedingly hard thing for the Christian to really grasp, for he feels such a wretched and worthless creature in himself. That the Lord of Glory should deem *him* of any consequence is difficult to conceive, that He regards him as of great worth “passeth knowledge.” Yet so it is. The Scriptures are very plain on this point. They declare, “For the LORD'S portion is His people” (Deut. 32:9). They speak of, “The riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph. 1:18). The Lord Jesus likens His Church unto “one pearl of great price,” so that He “went and sold all that He had, and bought it” (Matt. 13:46).

From the remotest antiquity men have thought much of precious stones, and almost fabulous prices have

been paid for them. With great ardour, and toil do men hunt after gold, but with even greater eagerness and labour will they seek the diamond. Hundreds of men will labour for a whole year in one of the diamond mines of Africa, and the entire result of their efforts may be held in the palm of your hand. Princes have been known to barter their estates in order to obtain some gem of peculiar brilliance and rare excellence. More desirable still are His saints in the esteem of the Lord Jesus. The value of a thing in the eyes of its possessor may be gauged by the price he was willing to pay for it. So valuable was the Church unto Christ that He gave *Himself* for it, and shed His “precious blood” to purchase it for Himself. Thus, the saints are likened unto “jewels” because of the great value which the Lord places upon them.

2. *Because of their Divine creation.* “A jewel is the production of God. Diamonds have been burned, and other jewels have been resolved into their elements; but, after the most laborious attempts, no chemist has yet been able to make a diamond. Men can cut the Gordian knot, but they cannot tie it again. Lives have been wasted in attempts to produce precious stones, but the discovery is still unmade; they are the secret productions of God's own skill, and chemists fail to tell how they are produced, then though they know their elements. So the world thinks it knows what a Christian is, but it cannot make one. All the wit in the world put together could not find out the secret of the heaven-born life; and all the sacraments, vestments, priests, prayers, and paraphernalia of Popery cannot create a Christian. The Lord alone can create a child of grace, and a Christian is as much a miracle as was Lazarus when he rose from the tomb. It is as great a work of Deity to create a believer as it is to create a world” (C.H. Spurgeon).

This is the basic reason why the saints are precious unto the heart of the Lord Jesus: He regards and receives them as the Father's workmanship, the Father's gift unto Him. This comes out, again and again in that wondrous 17th Chapter of John: “I have manifested Thy name unto the men which *Thou gavest Me* out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them *Me*” (v. 6). “I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which *Thou hast given Me*; for they are Thine” (v. 9). From all eternity Christ viewed them in the glass of God's decrees, and before the foundations of the earth were laid His “delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:31). Because the Father had, by His predestinating purpose, fashioned His elect as vessels “unto *honour*” (Rom. 9:21) the Son prizes them as of infinite value.

3. *Because of their rarity.* It is this, chiefly, which constitutes the value of precious stones. Were they numerous and common, found in the soil of every man's garden, they would not be so costly, nor so highly esteemed. The number of large diamonds, called paragons, is very small; and so we read, “*Not many* wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called” (1 Cor. 1:26). Possibly the disparity between diamonds and the pebbles of the brook is no greater than that which exists, numerically, between the regenerate and the unregenerate. The Lord Jesus plainly declared that God's flock is only a “little” one (Luke 12:32), and that *few* find that narrow way that leadeth unto Life (Matt. 7:14). God had never likened His people unto “jewels” had they been nearly so numerous as is now popularly supposed.

4. *Because of their beauty.* The jewel is prized for its luster. It is the brilliance of the gem which, in a great measure, is the evidence and test of its value. It is said that the colors of jewels are the brightest known, and are the nearest approaches to the rays of the solar spectrum that have yet been discovered. See how the diamond flashes and sparkles! And yet its beauty and brilliance are not so much inherent. Examine it in a dark room, and it emits no radiance. It is simply a reflector: its glory is borrowed from the light. So it is

with the saint: his comeliness is a comeliness which has been placed upon him, imputed to him. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for *He hath clothed me* with the garments of salvation, *He hath covered me* with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels” (Isa. 61:10).

It is very blessed to develop this aspect of our subject. To His disciples the Lord Jesus said, “Ye are the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), and why are they so? Because He could say “I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). The light of a Christian is a *reflected* one. That supplies the key to that little understood exhortation, “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16): “*so shine*” that *Christ* gets all the glory; “*so shine*” that we make it clear and plain to all that whatever goodness or righteousness there is in us, and whatever fruits are produced by us, all is *from Christ* as the Root. “For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8)—yes “in the Lord”!

5. *Because of their variety.* Precious stones vary considerably both in colour and in size, kind and value, brilliance and worth. If order is Heaven's first law, variety is certainly its second, for there is no uniformity in the ways and works of God, though there is a blessed underlying unity. So it is among gems, all are valuable, but all are not the same. There is the white diamond, the red ruby, the green emerald, the blue sapphire, the violet amethyst. Probably there is not a single ray of the spectrum which is not reflected by some of them. So it is among the saints. All are God's children, all bear the marks of the Divine “workmanship” (Eph. 2:10), all are equally precious to Christ, but all are not alike. Beautifully was this typified of old in the breastplate of Israel's high priest: twelve different precious stones adorned it, representing the tribes of Israel. No two of these gems were alike, but all were equally near to Aaron's heart!

This brings before us an important aspect of the truth which we do well to ponder. What difference we perceive between Thomas and John, between Peter and Paul; yet all were the Apostles of Christ. So it is now among the saints: there is almost endless variety in their capacities, their talents, their growth, the varying graces which they manifest. No one gem reflects *all* the colours of the spectrum, and no one believer exhibits all the excellencies of Christ. As the varied rays of the spectrum are *distributed* among jewels, so the varied excellencies of Christ are distributed among His people: one is conspicuous for meekness, another for courage; one for gentleness, another for firmness; one for patience, another for love. God's people are not all alike, and never will be; and all attempts at uniformity must fail. But it matters little whether we shine with the sapphire's blue, or the emerald's green, or the ruby's red, so long as we are the Lord's on the Day when He makes up His jewels.

6. *Because of their durability.* Precious stones are one of the very few things in this world which, notwithstanding the flight of time, neither decay nor die; and thus do they strikingly adumbrate in the natural realm that eternal life which pertains to the spiritual world. Diamonds are exceedingly hard: many of them will cut glass, while they cannot be scratched with the sharpest file. Many of them will be uninjured by the most potent acid; they will endure the test of fire; they are practically imperishable. In this also they resemble the Christian, who has within him a principle which is incorruptible, undefiled, and destined to endure forever. The world has often tried to destroy God's people, but all their efforts to do so

have been futile. The empty professor, the sham gem, is like a “paste” diamond: it quickly succumbs to trial; but the genuine child of God endures to the end, and shall reign with Christ forever and ever.

7. *Because of their history.* This is very striking indeed, and a separate sermon might well be devoted to enlarging thereon. First, think of *their lowly origin*. Trees grow in parks and flowers in the garden, but jewels are discovered in the mud and mire of earth. Even the lovely pearl is housed in the rough and unsightly shell of the oyster; while diamonds are found in the deep mines, in the bowels of the earth. What a parable and picture of the joint-heirs with Christ in their *natural* state! each of which has to own, “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. 51:5). Well did God say to Israel of old, “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the *hole of the pit* whence ye are digged” (Isa. 51:1). O the lowly origin of the Christian: “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock” (Psa. 40:2).

Second, consider the *cutting of them*. As the precious gem has been located and removed from its original position, the skillful fingers of the lapidary must work upon it. It has to be cut into a proper shape and many facets given to it, for in its original state it is rough and unsymmetrical. So it is with the elect of God. In their natural state they are “darkness” and quite incapable of reflecting the Light. But the Divine Lapidary, the Holy Spirit, after having sought them out, regenerates them. And what is the instrument He employs in this work? Why, the Word of God, which is “quick, and powerful, and *sharper* than any two-edged sword, *piercing* even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12). There is the spiritual *cutting* of God's “jewels.” The “sword of the Spirit” (Eph. 6:17) enters the conscience, searches the heart, cuts down pride, self-will, and self-righteousness.

Third, consider the *polishing of them*. This also forms an important part of the lapidary's work: he must smooth down the rough edges, and polish each facet so that it may sparkle the more gloriously; and often that is a long and tedious process. Thus it is in the history of the Christian. God does not take him to Glory the moment he is regenerated. No, though a spiritual life has been communicated to him, he needs to pass through many and varied experiences ere he is ripe and ready for Heaven. Ah, does not the spiritual reader perceive what we now have in mind? The reason you are still left in this world is because the Spirit has not yet finished the work of *polishing* your soul; you are not yet ready to be placed among the crown-jewels of the King. Here, then, is a comforting and heartening thought: let us seek to remind ourselves when passing through fiery trials, when smarting under chastisement, that it is part of the polishing process!

8. *Because of their glorious destiny.* “Thou shalt also be a crown of glory in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of thy God” (Isa. 62:3). What marvelous words are these—for faith and hope to lay hold of, for our feeble intellects cannot grasp them! Wondrous is it to think of rough stones, which first look like small pebbles, being found in the mud and mire of earth; then cut and polished till they scintillate with a brilliancy surpassing any earthly object, and being given an honoured place in the diadem of a monarch. But infinitely more wonderful is it that poor lost sinners, saved by sovereign grace, should be among the crown-jewels of the Son of God. But He will yet “present us faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Then shall He say to the Father, “The glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). Then shall be fulfilled that word, “When He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and *to be admired* in all them that believe” (2 Thess. 1:10).

“And they shall be Mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels” (Mal. 3:17). That Day has not yet arrived, but it is not far distant: “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry” (Heb. 10:37). What is meant by “When I *make up* My jewels”? Is it not when the *complete* number of His redeemed are regenerated and polished? Is it not when He shall descend from Heaven with a shout, resurrect the sleeping saints and transform the living ones and rapture them *together*, so that we shall “ever be with the Lord” (1 Thess. 4:16, 17): “make up” (Mal. 3:17), “caught up” (1 Thess. 4:17)!

Our dear father, now in Heaven, once wrote us: “Earthly jewels sometimes get separated from their owner, Christ's jewels never: 'For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life . . . nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord' (Rom. 8:38, 39). Earthly jewels are sometimes lost; Christ's jewels never: 'I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of My hand' (John 10:28). Earthly jewels are sometimes stolen: Christ's never: 'in Heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal' (Matt. 6:20).” Are you *sure* that *you* are one of Christ's jewels? Then seek to shine for Him now.—A.W.P.

(The above is a sermon, slightly revised, which was preached by the editor in Garden Grove, California, over twenty year ago.)

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February, 1934

### Self Knowledge

“Commune with your own heart upon your bed” (Psa. 4:4). This is a Divine command, but it receives very little attention today from the great majority of professing Christians, and that to their immeasurable harm for every command of God is designed for our good, and is disregarded to our loss. Were we more genuinely convinced of the importance and value of self knowledge, and governed by a due esteem of it, and did we but prosecute it rightly, we should make it our duty and business to become better acquainted with our hearts and their workings, and be delivered from many of the evil effects of self ignorance. But alas, God still has to say, as He did of old, “My people doth not *consider*” (Isa. 1:3).

Self knowledge is that acquaintance with ourselves which reveals to us what we are and do, and what we ought to be and do in order to our living usefully here and happily hereafter. The means of it is self examination in the light of Holy Scripture. The purpose of it is self government: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). It consists principally in the knowledge of our *souls*, which is attained by a particular attention to their various faculties, dispositions, and workings. A man's soul is properly *himself*: Matthew 16:26 and compare Luke 9:25. The body is but the house, the soul is the tenant which indwells it.

Other knowledge is very apt to make a man conceited, but a growing knowledge of *himself* will keep the Christian humble. It is the lack of self knowledge which is the occasion of so much pride. “If a man (through self ignorance) think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal.

6:3). The Lord Jesus upbraided His disciples with their self ignorance when He said, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of” (Luke 9:55). The more ignorant we are of ourselves, the readier we are to condemn others; but the better acquainted we are with ourselves, the slower shall we be in rashly censuring others for the same crimes of which *we* are guilty: Romans 2:1, 21, 22.

A true knowledge of ourselves cannot be acquired without diligent and frequent self examination. To this duty there exists in human nature a strong repugnance, so that by most it is greatly neglected. But when it is attempted, we are in much danger of being misled by self love and prejudice. To acquire any true knowledge of ourselves a good degree of honesty and impartiality is essentially requisite. But an honest desire to arrive at the truth is not the only prerequisite to self knowledge: the mind must be enlightened in regard to the standard of rectitude to which we ought to be conformed: the Word of God should dwell richly in us, and by its principles and precepts we must form all sentiments respecting ourselves.

Beware of the common illusion of forming your estimate of yourself from the favorable opinion of those around you. They cannot know the secret principles from which you act; and flattery may have much influence in leading them to speak in your favor. We may often learn even from our enemies and calumniators what are the weak points in our characters. They are discerning in detecting faults, and, generally, have some show of pretext for what they allege against us. We may, therefore, derive more benefit from the sarcasms of our foes than from the flattery of our friends.

We need to become acquainted with *our frailties and deficiencies*, that we may know where our weakness lies; otherwise, like Sampson, we are likely to expose ourselves to numerous temptations and troubles. Every man has his weak side, and every wise man *knows* where it is, and will be sure to keep a double guard there. Yet our limitations and incapacities can only be discovered by a considerable degree of self-acquaintance. How often have we attempted things beyond our reach and assayed to do things out of our powers; we were blind to our deficiencies through self ignorance. It has been truly said, “A wise man as well as a fool has his foibles: but the difference between them is, that the foibles of the former are known to himself and concealed from the world, while the foibles of the other are known to the world and concealed from himself.”

We need to know *our talents and capacities*, and how they may be improved to the greatest advantage. What money, time, and labor have been wasted through people trying to learn and master that for which they had no talent—music, art, languages, etc. How many have aimed to be preachers who were never qualified by God for such a calling. These are illustrations, perhaps, of more extreme cases, but the same principle is active in all of us. Just as each organ in the body has its own particular office to discharge, so each Christian has his own individual place to fill; and the sooner he discovers what his *real* place is, the better. A wise man, instead of aspiring after talents he has not, will set about cultivating those he has: “Every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that” (1 Cor. 7:7).

We need to know *our constitutional sins*. With some people this is easy, with others more self examination is required. The reason for this is that the besetting sins of some are more open and flagrant, while with others they are more secret and unsuspected. Every person has some particular turn or cast of mind which distinguishes him from others as much as the particular constitution of his body, and their individual traits

naturally tend to certain kinds of sin. Some are more prone to sloth, pride, selfishness, envy, malice, self-indulgence. For one not to know his prevailing sin is great self ignorance. A man who is engaged in the study of himself must be willing to know the worst of himself.

We need to know what are *our most dangerous temptations*. He who is properly acquainted with himself has discovered in what circumstances he is in greatest danger of trespassing. This is a point which needs to be examined thoroughly. Consider in what company you are apt to lose possession and government of yourself and on what occasions you become most vain and unguarded. Flee that company and avoid those occasions if you would keep your conscience clear. It is of first importance in order to self knowledge and self government to be acquainted with all the avenues of sin and to observe how it is we are most led into it, and to set reason and conscience to guard those passes. No man can sincerely pray that God will not lead him into temptation if he takes no care himself to avoid it.

The *benefits* of self knowledge are too numerous for us to mention. We single out one: the man who knows himself best knows wherein he most needs to *deny* himself. The great duty of self-denial, which Christ so expressly requires from His followers, has been mistaken and abused, not only by the Papists with their penances and fasts, but by Protestants in instances of voluntary abstinence and unnecessary austerities. Such people are very apt to be too censorious against those who indulge themselves (temperately) in the use of things indifferent. Each believer must learn his own danger points, and guard against every thing that would assail them. Each must learn *what* it is which *he* or *she* most needs to abstain from.—A.W.P.

N. B.—For most of the above we are indebted to a little work by John Mason.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

February, 1934

### Grace Reigning in Election

“Vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt” (Job 11:12). Accordingly, he finds fault with election, as a mere system of arbitrary partiality, and favouritism: and tells us that if there be such a thing as total helplessness in man, and sovereign election in God, then man is not to blame if he be lost. Man's entire apostasy and death in sin, so that he cannot save himself, and God's entire supremacy, so that He saves whom He will, are doctrines exceedingly distasteful to human pride. But they are scriptural.

Why was the one thief saved and the other lost? “Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in Thy sight.” God was not bound to save the one, and He had power enough to have saved the other, and neither could save himself. What made the difference? The sovereign grace of God. Why was Paul saved and Judas lost? Was it because the former deserved to be saved and the latter to be lost? No, neither deserved to be saved. Was it because the one was a fitting object for the grace of God and the other not? No, the one was no more a fitting object than the other. Was it because Paul chose Christ, and Judas rejected Him? Well, but how was it that Paul chose Christ? Was it not because Christ chose him?

Why was it that Judea was made a land of light and Egypt remained a region of darkness? Who made the difference? Man or God? Was God unjust in leaving Egypt in the shadow of death when He made light to arise on Israel? What had Israel done to deserve a privilege like this? Why is it that Britain is a land of light and Africa a land of darkness? Who made the difference? Who sent the Gospel to Britain and withheld it from Africa? Is God unjust in leaving the mighty continent in the hands of Satan, and in

delivering from his yoke this small Island of the Sea?

None have deserved salvation. No man is more fit for it than another. God was not bound to save any. God might have saved all. Yet He has only saved some. Is He, then, unjust in only saving some when He could have saved all? Objectors say, Oh, those who are lost, are lost because they rejected Christ. But did not *all* equally reject Him at first? What made the unbelief of some give way? Was it because *they* willed it, or because God put forth His power in them? Surely the latter. Might He not, then, have put forth His power in all, and prevented any from rejecting the Saviour? Yet He did not. Why? Because so it seemed good in His sight. Is it unjust in God to save only a few when all are equally doomed to die? If not, is there any injustice in His determining aforehand to save these few, and leave the rest unsaved? They could not save themselves, and was it unjust in Him to *resolve*, in His infinite wisdom, to save them? Or was it unjust in Him not to resolve to save all? Had *all perished* there would have been no injustice with Him. How is it possible that there can be injustice in His resolving to *save some*?

There can be no grace where there is no sovereignty. Deny God's right to *choose* whom He will and you deny His right to *save* whom He will. Deny His right to save whom He will, and you deny that salvation is of grace. If salvation is made to hinge upon any desert or fitness in man, seen or foreseen, *grace* is at an end.

One of the controversies of the present day is respecting the *will* of God;—as to whether His will or man's is the regulating power in the universe, and the procuring cause of salvation to souls. The supremacy of God's will over individual persons and events is questioned. Things are made to turn upon man's will, not on God's. Conversion is made to turn on man's will, not on God's. Man's will, not God's, is to decide what individuals are to enter Heaven. Man's pen, and not God's, is to write the names of the saved one's in the Lamb's Book of Life! Much zeal is shown for the freedom of man's will, little jealousy seems to be left for the freedom of God's will. Men insist that it is unjust and tyrannical in God to control *their* wills, yet see nothing unjust, nothing proud, nothing Satanic in attempting to fetter and direct the will of God. Man, it seems, cannot have his own foolish will gratified, unless the all-wise God will consent to relinquish *His!*

Such are some of the steps in the march of Atheism. Such are the preparations made in these last days by the wily usurper for dethroning the eternal Jehovah. Men may call these speculations. They may condemn them as unprofitable. To the law and to the testimony! Of such *speculations* the Bible is full. *There* man is a helpless worm, and salvation, from first to last, is of the Lord. God's will, and not man's, is the law of the universe. If we are to maintain the Gospel,—if we are to hold fast grace,—if we are to preserve Jehovah's honour,—we must grasp these truths with no feeble hand. For if there be no such a Being as a Supreme predetermining Jehovah, then the universe will soon be a chaos; and if there be no such a thing as free electing love, every minister of Christ may close his lips, and every sinner upon earth sit down in mute despair.—H. Bonar, 1844.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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March, 1934

### Preaching the Law

The fairest face on earth, which was endowed with the most comely features, would soon become ugly and unsightly if one feature continued to grow while all the others remained undeveloped. No matter how well formed or beautiful the mouth, if it became ten times the size of the eyes or ears, how repulsive would it appear. *Beauty is principally a matter of proportion.* So it is with the Word of God: its beauty and blessedness are best perceived when it is presented in its true proportions. To be all the time dwelling on the love of God and be silent about His wrath, or to be constantly expounding His righteousness and say little or nothing about His mercy, is to present a caricature of the Divine perfections. So also to preach ten sermons on the Gospel of God's grace to one upon God's Law, is to lose the balance of truth, and to present the truth *disproportionately*.

It has long appeared to the writer that the greatest and most deplorable defect in modern "evangelism" is the almost total absence of the preaching of God's Law. And as this little magazine is sent to a considerable number of preachers and missionaries, the editor feels it laid upon him to write a short article thereon. Before a servant of God is warranted in setting before the unsaved the Divine *way of salvation*, he needs to make very clear wherein lies the *need of salvation*. This is the order of Scripture throughout. The Old Testament precedes the New. The ministry of John the Baptist comes before that of the Lord Jesus: and the former came "in the way of righteousness" (Matt. 21:32), calling to repentance. Romans 3:10-20 (read it!) precedes Romans 3:21-26, and so it should be in all preaching.

“By the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20): then why not preach God's Law! Does not the Apostle to the Gentiles tell us, in that wondrous and blessed biographical passage of Romans 7, “I had not *known sin*, but by the law” (v. 7)! Fellow-preachers, the knowledge of God's Law is absolutely necessary in order to a true knowledge of sin. Because God's Law is *the rule of man's conduct*, of all his heart exercises and outward actions, so that he is sinful, or not, just in proportion as he conforms to the law, or does not conform thereto, it necessarily follows that he cannot possibly judge of his own character and determine whether he be a sinner or no, if he is completely ignorant of the law; and he *must* be ignorant of his own sinfulness, however great a sinner he be, just in proportion to the degree of his ignorance of the law he is under.

“*Sin is the transgression of the law*” (1 John 3:4): therefore, where there is no law, there is no sin; and he who has no idea, no apprehension or knowledge of the law, has no real idea of sin; it is impossible that he should have, for every person's notion of sin will be according to his notion of the law. If he thinks God's Law requires that which it does not, then he will judge that to be sin which in truth is not so. If he thinks the law he is under does not require what it does (for example, heart-purity), then he will look upon that to be no sin, which in truth is so; and so far as he sees not, the ground and reasonableness of the law he will be ignorant of the crime or real sinfulness in transgressing it. While he is ignorant of the excellency of the law, and the authority of its Giver, and so sees not the glory of the law, he must be blind to the turpitude of sin, and can have no true idea of it.

There is a threefold knowledge of sin and the law. First, a *speculative* knowledge. Men may have, to a considerable degree, clear and sound intellectual views with respect to the Law of God and to sin. They may perceive the reasonableness of God's Law, the obligation they are under to obey it, their great lack of conformity thereto, and the infinite evil there is in all sin. They may reason accurately about these things, and yet their hearts remain quite *unaffected* by them. They may live at the greatest ease, trouble not themselves about their disobedience, and continue sinning with a high hand. So it was with Israel of old; so it is with many today who are familiar with the letter of God's Law.

Second, there is a *convicting knowledge*. Unregenerate persons may have their consciences awakened, so as to attend to these things in some measure as solemn realities, and with particular application to themselves. They may feel themselves condemned by the law and under the curse of Him against whom they have so grievously rebelled. They may have such a sense of majesty, holiness, and power of God, the dreadfulness of His anger and their constant exposedness to be cast into Hell, as to fill them with sore distress and horror. Self-interest, the instinct of self-preservation, and the movings of self-love may cause them to be greatly concerned how they shall escape the wrath to come. Later, their convictions fade and disappear.

Third, there is a *regenerative* knowledge. Those who have been born again have a heart-realization of the superlative excellence and glory of the Divine character, by which He is infinitely distinguished from all other beings, and they feel the deep obligations they are under to love Him perfectly with all their hearts forever. They discern reasonableness, the spirituality, and extent of the law in *such* a manner and degree as produces heart approbation and love to it, and their souls exclaim, “The law is holy, just and good.” Hence they perceive what *sin* is. It appears to them infinitely odious and ill-deserving, a dreadful opposition to

the Divine character and Law, and they hate and abhor sin, and wish to be done with it forever.

“They who have quite wrong ideas of the Law of God will have equally wrong ideas of their own character as sinners, and, consequently, wrong ideas of the character of the Mediator and the grace revealed in the Gospel. The Gospel has such respect to the Law of God, and the latter is so much the reason and ground of the former, and so essential to the wisdom and glory of it, that it cannot be understood by him who is ignorant of the law; and, consequently, our idea and apprehension of the Gospel will be erroneous and wrong just as far as we have wrong notions of God's Law. The character of a Mediator is necessary, excellent, and glorious, only in this view and on this supposition, that the Law of God, which requires perfect persevering obedience, on pain of eternal damnation, is unchangeably right, just, excellent, and glorious, and, consequently, sin infinitely criminal and odious; for the most essential part of the character of the Mediator consists in His honouring this law, and making atonement for sin. He, therefore, who does not believe there is any such law, or does not view it in this light, and so does not see sin in its true demerit and hatefulness, cannot possibly understand the Gospel, but must be blind to the true wisdom and glory of it.

“This has been, and now is, the sad case of multitudes under the Gospel. They hope and expect to be saved by Christ; they speak much of the grace of the Gospel, and the wonderful mercy of God to sinners; but at the same time are ignorant of the Divine Law; and never were reconciled to it as holy, just, and good; so never saw sin in its true odiousness and ill-desert. Let such rise as high as they will in the admiration of Gospel grace, and, though they are affected even to raptures, they are wholly ignorant of the true grace of God, of their need of a Mediator, and of the way of salvation by Him. So important are right notions of the law. He who fails here must be in darkness, with respect to the whole system of religious truth the true Gospel will be hid from him; and to him Christ crucified will be nothing but a stumbling-block and the most perfect foolishness.

“There are many who speak out and say, 'We do not believe there is now any such law binding on men which requires perfect obedience on pain of eternal damnation. This law is wholly set aside by the Gospel, and we never were under it, nor indeed would it be just in God to hold us to it. Christ—blessed be His name!—has introduced a more mild dispensation, so that we are now not under law, but under grace.' But, pray, what grace is there in abolishing and freeing you from a law which you never could be justly under, and which, therefore, ought in justice to be set aside? And what need of a Mediator to die, to deliver you from this law and introduce a more mild dispensation? Must there be so costly a sacrifice to induce the great Law-giver to give up that which He could not justly insist upon, it being in itself unreasonable? But if it is in itself reasonable, being founded in the reason and nature of things, it cannot be given up and abolished on any consideration whatsoever. Surely, such, however they may 'desire to be teachers of the law; understanding neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm' (1 Tim. 1:7). When will such horrible jargon and blasphemy be banished from the Christian world? How far are such from knowing their own character as sinners, and the true grace of the Gospel whereby the sinner is saved!

“And suffer me to add here a hearty submission to, and acquiescence and delight in the Law of God, rightly understood, and so a true hatred of sin must take place in order to any degree of true approbation of the Gospel and faith and trust in Christ. For so far are we from approving of the Law of God in our hearts,

and a sense of the hatefulfulness and ill-desert of sin, just so far shall we always be from being pleased with the atonement of Christ, rightly understood, in which the law is set up and honoured as most excellent and glorious, and sin is condemned in the highest possible degree, and its infinite odiousness and ill desert set in the most clear and striking light imaginable. Indeed, this approbation and sense of heart is implied in a true idea and knowledge of the law in its excellency and glory, and of sin in its true odiousness and ill desert: for the very idea of duty and excellence consists in a sense of heart, and is itself a pleasedness with that beauty and delight in it; and there can be no distinction between seeing the true hatefulfulness of an object and hating it.

“Thus evident is it that the sinner who comes to Christ for salvation comes as a true penitent, and that repentance, which most essentially consists in a sense of heart of the true odiousness and ill-desert of sin, is not only implied in faith in Christ, *but is necessary in order to this faith*; and the former takes place before the latter, as there must be the knowledge and approbation of the Divine character and Law, and a sight and sense of the ill-desert of sin, before there can be any true knowledge of the Mediator and faith in Him. Thus it is only the humble, contrite, broken-hearted penitent who is revived and comforted by Christ, *as none but such ever did or ever will*, know His true character or are prepared to receive with approbation and joy the good news He proclaims. This is so plain and demonstrable that it may be reasonably concluded that many who have objected against the notion that repentance toward God is antecedent to faith in Christ, and before it, as being heretical and absurd, have done it through some misunderstanding of the matter.

“There are those who zealously contend that a sight and belief of the *grace* of God through Christ, and a view of God as reconciled to the sinner by Him, is the first and only thing that begets love to God and His Law, and repentance of sin, and that it is impossible that the sinner should be reconciled to God and the Divine Law in any other view. I leave the attentive reader to observe and reflect upon the absurdity of such a notion. It is certain to a demonstration that they who are not heartily reconciled *to God and His Law*, and do not hate sin and abhor themselves for it, do not know and are not reconciled to the grace of God through Christ. Nor can they attain to the latter if not first brought to the former, but will remain eternal enemies to both. They, therefore, who have never been reconciled to God and His Holy Law in any other way but by first seeing and believing in the grace of God through Christ, *are yet ignorant of the true grace of God, and enemies to it*. And all their love to Christ, and supposed reconciliation to God—all their repentance, religious affections, and rapturous admiration of the love and grace of God is nothing but mere enthusiastic delusion, bottomed on that selfishness which is perfect enmity against God” (Samuel Hopkins, 1800—in close fellowship with Jonathan Edwards).

Hence it appears of what *great importance it is* that the Law of God should be preached and held constantly before saved and unsaved, as this is absolutely indispensable in order to give a proper view of the Gospel. Alas, how many poor souls are being deceived through preachers studiously keeping the law out of their sight, yea, making remarks derogatory unto the Holy Law of God. Notwithstanding the high-sounding phrases which may be employed in favor of the Gospel, and no matter how much the grace of God may be magnified in words, they are, in truth, without meaning, and convey no proper idea of the true grace of God, and the real Gospel of Christ is neglected; for the Gospel is a message of glad tidings for those who are sick of sin, who desire to be conformed to the law, who are groaning under a felt anguish for

their transgressions of it.

1. Make clear *the absolute and infinite authority of the Law-Giver*. This is of first importance, not only that God may be honoured, but that the sinner may the better perceive the infinite enormity and unspeakable guilt of openly defying the Most High. The law is the voice of God to His creatures; it consists not merely of good advice, but of Divine commands. It is the rule which the Almighty Jehovah has set up, and therefore it is clothed with *His* authority. Because of His excellency and greatness, He is exalted infinitely above all creatures, and it is His right to dictate to and dispose of them. Failure to submit to His authority, disregard of His righteous Law, is the crime of all crimes: it is spiritual anarchy.—A.W.P. (To be completed in the April issue)

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### **Preaching the Law** (Completed)

2. Explain *the inexorable demands of the law*. It requires perfect, perpetual, personal obedience. It is given for the regulation of all the faculties and powers of the creature, and all their exercises and conduct, both internal and external, both of the thoughts and motions of the heart, and all their outward behaviour. It is the one unchanging rule of every moral agent, in all places and at all times, not leaving him at liberty to act without regard to the law in any one instance, so long as he exists. No allowance is made for the slightest infraction. The obedience which it requires is not a forced or feigned obedience, but must be a cordial and loving one.

3. Expound *its spirituality and extent*. The Law of God is a perfect rule, being neither too strict nor too lax. It requires not too much or too little in any instance, but points out and prescribes what is exactly right and fit in all cases. Hence every voluntary exercise of the creature is either in perfect conformity to it, and so is perfectly right, or so far as it is not so, is wrong and a violation of it. There is no medium between right and wrong, between virtue and sin. God requireth truth in the *inward parts* (Psa. 51:6), and every ungodly thought, imagination, or desire, is a violation of the law: Matthew 5:22-48.

4. Announce *its fearful curse*. There is a dreadful penalty annexed to God's Law, which consists in a threat to the disobedient: "Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them" (Gal 3:10). This is peculiar to a law. Where a rule and directory of conduct is given,

and where it is clothed with authority, it must be enforced by the authority of the legislator. A rule which carried in it no threat to the transgressor is clothed with no authority at all, has not the force of a law. The penalty (or evil threatened) by God's Law corresponds exactly to the authority of the Law-Giver and the just desert of the transgressor: it cannot be anything short of *eternal* punishment, *infinite* misery.

5. Insist that *every member of the human race is under* God's Law, and will yet be judged by it. Show that this *must* be so, for otherwise there would be no rule by which our actions could be squared, and the whole of our conduct would possess no moral quality. “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15); “sin is not imputed when there is no law” (Rom. 5:13); but God *does* “impute” sin to all men, therefore all men must be under His Law: were it otherwise, they would be irresponsible and sinless creatures. Romans 3:19 makes it plain that “all the world” is under the law and under its curse.

6. Point out that *Christ did not abolish the law*: He expressly announced “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). The very phrasing of this declaration shows that men *do* “think” He came here to abrogate God's Law; but their thoughts are utterly erroneous and highly insulting to the holy Son of God. Instead of abolishing the law, Christ constantly expounded and enforced it, and was Himself subject to the law, as a perfect example for us to follow. Nor has Christ delivered His people from the law as a rule of life: 1 Corinthians 9:21.

7. Show *what is that salvation* which Christ came to purchase for His people. First, the gift of His Spirit (Acts 2:33), to overcome their enmity against God's law (Rom. 8:7), and to work in them a love for it (Rom. 7:22). It is by *this* we may know whether we have been regenerated. Second, to bring us into a hearty and cordial consent to the law, so that each true Christian can say “so then with the mind I myself *serve the law of God*” (Rom. 7:25). Third, to deliver from the curse by dying for our sins of disobedience against the law, Himself enduring its penalty in our stead: Galatians 3:13.

Only as the first five points above are faithfully preached is any real foundation laid for the Gospel message! Without that foundation the preacher is building a house which will not stand; yea, he is throwing dust in the eyes of the people, bolstering them up in a false hope. Until the Law is given its proper place in the pulpit, and is preached regularly, plainly, authoritatively, the tide of lawlessness which has swept over this favoured land (and throughout all the so-called “civilized nations”), will continue rising higher and higher. Well may we pray, “It is time for Thee, LORD, to work: *for they have made void Thy law*” (Psa. 119:126).—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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April, 1934

### Submission to Our Sovereign

“Our God is in the heavens: He hath done whatsoever He hath pleased” (Psa. 115:3). Being God, He consults no one; yet being omniscient and infinitely holy, He does only that which is good and right. But we are finite creatures; yea, fallen creatures, and sin has darkened our understanding. Therefore *we* are quite incompetent to gauge or grasp *God's* ways; and to criticize or murmur against them is the height of impiety and wickedness: “Shall the thing formed say to Him that formed it, Why hast Thou made me thus?” (Rom. 9:20). True spirituality and practical godliness consist in *yielding ourselves* to the sovereign and perfect will of God, bowing submissively unto whatever He lays upon us, seeking grace to do whatever He commands us.

Much that God does is displeasing to the flesh, and sin within rises up and rebels. This is the very nature of sin: to oppose God, to be dissatisfied with His appointments. Daily does the Christian need to ask God to lay His cooling and quietening hand upon him. Daily does he need to beg Him to increase his faith, so that his *confidence in Him* may be so entire that he will not call into question any of His dealings with him; but rather will say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (v. 15). *That* is the great secret of real and lasting peace of heart. But *that* is something to which all the unregenerate are total strangers, though they will not acknowledge it, and try hard to conceal it. A heart which is truly at rest is one that realizes that *God* (and not the Devil) is on the throne of the universe, directing all things by His unerring wisdom and making *all* things “work together for good” unto His own people.

It is true that even to the Christian many of God's ways are profoundly mysterious: if they were not, there would be no room for the exercise of *faith*. If the writer or the reader were on the throne and had *all* power at his disposal, he would order things in this world very different from what they now are. Yes, and that would only manifest what a *fool* he is. How so? Because Perfect Wisdom *is* now directing all the concerns of every life and all the affairs of this world as a whole, and therefore the very desire to altar what is, only exhibits our folly. *Faith* knows that unerring wisdom is regulating all things; that One too wise to err holds the helm in His hand, and that He “doeth all things well.” Though to sight and sense things *seem* to be all out of order, though human reason is quite unable to perceive the perfection of God's governmental ways and providential dealings, *faith knows* that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things” (Rom 11:36).

God could put an end to all sin in the world right now did He so please. So to He could save every sinner on earth this moment did He so choose. As to *why* He does not do so, we cannot tell; nor is it any of *our* business! Our business is not to mount the bench and pass judgment on the ways and dealings of the Most High: that is what the Devil once sought to do, and it resulted in his eternal undoing. Our business is to be clay in the hands of the Potter; to uncomplainingly submit to His holy and sovereign pleasure, to lie passive, and be molded by Him. Our business is to take our place in the dust before the Almighty, and say, Lord, Thy mercy subdue my rebellious will, quieten my restless soul, purify my unbelieving heart. Our business is to delight ourselves in *the Lord* (Psa. 37:4), and to *give thanks* “always for *all* things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Eph. 5:20).

We live in the midst of a rebellious generation who are ever murmuring and complaining at God's appointments: grumbling at *His* weather, chaffing at His restrictions, belching forth their discontent every time He crosses *their* wills. Verily, “the poison of asps is under their lips” (Rom. 3:13). And my reader, unless we are constantly on our guard, we shall be corrupted by them, learn their evil ways, and acquire their wicked speech. Our safeguard is to have as little to do with them as possible, and to cultivate more and more communion with Him who never murmured, but always delighted in the Father's will—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1934

### Righteousness

“For the kingdom of God (or our service to Christ) is not (consists not in) meat and drink; but *righteousness*, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. For he that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men” (Rom. 14: 17, 18). By which word “*righteousness*” he meaneth, as James doth, the royal law, the perfect law, which is the moral precept evangelized or delivered to us by the hand of Christ (James 2:8, 9). The law was given *twice* at Sinai; the last time it was given with a proclamation of grace and mercy of God, and of the pardon of sins going before: Exodus 19 and 34:1-10. The *second* giving is here intended: for so it cometh after faith, which first receiveth the proclamation of forgiveness. Hence we are said to do this “*righteousness*” in the joy and peace of the Holy Spirit. Now he that in these things serveth Christ, is accepted of God, and approved of men. For who is he that can justly find fault with him that fulfilleth the royal law from a principle of faith and love? “If ye fulfill the royal law according to the Scriptures,—Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—ye do well”; ye are approved of men. Again, he that hath loveth another, hath fulfilled the law, for love is the fulfilling of the law. He then that serveth Christ according to the royal law, from faith and love going before, he is a fit person for church communion. God accepteth him, men approve him. Now, that the royal law is *the moral precept* read James 2:8-12. It is also called the “law of liberty” because the bondage is taken away by forgiveness going before; and this it is by which we are judged.—John Bunyan, 1660.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1934

### **A Prayer and Confession**

O most merciful God! I rejoice that Thou dost reign over the universe with a sovereign sway, so that Thou dost according to Thy will, in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth. Thou art the Maker of my body, and Father of my spirit, and Thou hast a perfect right to dispose of me in that manner which will most effectually promote Thy glory: and I know that whatsoever Thou doest is right, and wise, and just, and good. And whatever may be my eternal destiny, I rejoice in the assurance that Thy great name will be glorified in me. But as Thou hast been pleased to reveal Thy mercy and Thy grace, to our fallen miserable world; and as the Word of this salvation has been preached unto me, inviting me to accept of eternal life, upon the gracious terms of the Gospel, I do cordially receive the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour and only Redeemer, believing sincerely the whole testimony which Thou hast given respecting His Divine character, His real incarnation, His unspotted and holy life, His numerous and beneficent miracles, His expiatory and meritorious death, and His glorious resurrection and ascension. I believe, also, in His supreme exaltation, in His prevalent intercession for His chosen people, in His affectionate care and aid afforded to His suffering members here below, and in His second coming to receive His humble followers to dwell with Himself in Heaven; and to take vengeance on His obstinate enemies. My only hope and confidence of being saved rests simply on the mediatorial work and prevailing intercession of the Lord Jesus Christ; in consequence of which the Holy Spirit is graciously sent to make application of Christ's redemption, by working faith in us, and repentance unto life; and rendering us meet for the heavenly inheritance, by sanctifying us in the whole man, spirit and soul and body.

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

And now, *righteous Lord God Almighty*, I would not attempt to conceal any of my actual transgressions, however vile and shameful they are. But would penitently confess them before Thee; and would plead in my defense nothing but the perfect righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ, who died, the Just for the unjust, to bring me near to God. For His sake alone do I ask or expect the rich blessings necessary to my salvation. For although I am unworthy, He is most worthy; though I have no righteousness, He has provided by His expiatory death, and by His holy life a complete justifying righteousness, in which spotless robe I pray that I may be clothed; so that Thou my righteous Judge, wilt see no sin in me, but wilt acquit me from every accusation, and justify me freely by Thy grace, through the righteousness of my Lord and Saviour, with whom Thou art ever well pleased. And my earnest prayer is, that *Jesus* may save me from my sins, as well as from their punishment; that I may be redeemed from all iniquity, as well as from the condemnation of the law; that the work of sanctification may be carried on in my soul by Thy Word and Spirit, until it be perfected at Thine appointed time. And grant, O Lord! that as long as I am in the body, I may make it my constant study and chief aim to glorify Thy name, both with soul and body, which are no longer mine, but Thine; for I am “bought with a price”—not with silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. Enable me to let my light so shine, that others, seeing my good works, may be led to glorify Thy name. O! make use of me as an humble instrument of advancing Thy kingdom on earth, and promoting the salvation of immortal souls. If Thou hast appointed sufferings for me here below, I beseech Thee to consider my weakness, and let Thy chastisements be those of a loving father, that I may be made partaker of Thy holiness. And let me not be tempted above what I am able to bear, but with the temptation make a way for escape.

O most merciful God! cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength declineth. Now, when I am old and gray-haired, let Thy grace be sufficient for me; and enable me to bring forth fruit,

even in old age. May my hoary head be found in the ways of righteousness. Preserve my mind from dotage and inbecility, and my body from protracted disease and excruciating pain. Deliver me from despondency and discouragement in my declining years, and enable me to bear afflictions with patience, fortitude, and perfect submission to Thy holy will. Lift upon me perpetually the light of Thy reconciled countenance, and cause me to rejoice in Thy salvation, and in the hope of Thy glory. May the peace that passeth all understanding be constantly diffused through my soul, so that my mind may remain calm through all the storms and vicissitudes of life.

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

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May, 1934

### **A Prayer**

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

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1934

### Goats

It is our steadily deepening conviction that the “goats” of Matthew 25:32, 33, 41-46 refer not to the openly wicked and profane, but to those who pose as the real children of God; that is, to *professing Christians*. We wrote to a Brother in Australia who is engaged in the rearing of goats, and is making a close study of their characteristics and ways. What he says confirms our opinion, for in many respects these animals adumbrate and illustrate the religious goats. We quote the leading points of interest from his letter, adding a few comments thereon.

“From the beginning they were chosen (by a woman!) as being the most suitable instruments *to deceive* a blind and fleshly child of God (Gen. 27:9)”—the *first* reference to “goats” in Scripture! “They were taken 'from the flock',” intimating they typified those associated with the true people of God. “But why not a lamb! Ah, even one who was blind and could not 'see afar off' could not be deceived into believing Jacob was Esau if he had been covered with the skins and wool of a lamb!”

The next reference to “goats” is in Genesis 30:32, where we find Jacob proposing to Laban that he should receive the “brown” cattle and sheep (generally called “black sheep”) and the “spotted and speckled among the goats” as his remuneration: upon which Brother Connerton asks, “is not this the 'hire' chosen by shepherds who are *not right with God*?” Sad to say, it is—typifying those backslidden servants of God who are content to minister unto and receive their salary from a flock of “black sheep” and “speckled goats,” or white-washed worldlings.

Next we read “They took Joseph's coat, and killed *a kid of the goats*, and dipped the coat in the blood” (Gen. 37:31). “This is parallel in principle with, I may almost say in detail, with Genesis 27:9.” True; for the sons of Jacob did not propose to deceive their father—who was out of communion with God—by dipping Joseph's coat in the blood of a lamb! Ah, is not God just in permitting *us* to be deceived by the “goats” when we are out of touch with Himself?

“Most solemn is Exodus 36:14.” The tabernacle—type of Christ, and His people in union with Him—was covered with the skins of “goats,” *over which* was a covering of rams' skins (Exo. 36:19). “Our true character, and *His also*, is concealed from the world by the 'goats.' How awe-inspiring to notice them taking cover under 'the rams' skins *dyed red*.” There is nothing which so hides the true character of Christianity on earth as the worldly and fleshly lives of empty professors who claim to be under the blood of Christ.

“Ezekiel 34:18 (see previous verse) is a perfect picture of what goats do. Pastures become 'goat sick': where goats are left in green pastures they afterward become barren (whereas sheep *improve* them!), and nothing—including the goat himself—will eat there. If you chain him, he will cry all day, and trample it down, and sooner starve than eat it. They will mark all trees, especially fruit trees, climbing up and breaking off the branches. Scientists tell us that great deserts in the East owe their existence to the goat, which once fed on them, but not a blade of grass nor tree is now to be seen there.” How like thousands of “churches” today, where the Spirit has been “quenched” by a preponderance of “goats” (unregenerate) in the membership, and now all that is there is spiritual desolation.

“Goats are intolerant and uncharitable in their conduct towards other creatures, and are extremely selfish. I have seen a big basin of bran-mash given to some goats, and the strongest stand over it, eat his or her fill and then put a front hoof in the remainder, or top it over in a most brutal manner; you may scold or flog, but it is of no avail. The next strongest one does the same.” So it is with the religious goats; *they* have no relish for the ministry of a true servant of God, and will do all in their power to prejudice *others* against him.

“Goats are fickle and fastidious. To get the best results from goats and obtain from them the most milk, they must be given *a great variety of food*, for they quickly tire of one thing, and will refuse to eat it. Starve? Oh no! they will eat just sufficient for their own personal needs, but the little extra which goes to make milk for *you* is left, or rather, is pushed scornfully aside.” Thus it is with the religious goats; they must be entertained with a constantly changing program;—it is the opposite with sheep; they never tire of the green pastures! So too the professor is greedy in devouring all he hears, but no fruit is yielded for God or good unto His people.

“Goats will not mix with sheep: there is no record extant of their ever becoming mixed. We have a mule, which is half donkey and half horse; a “jennie” which is half horse and half she-ass; and many other monsters, such as half cat and half rabbit; but half goat and half sheep? No—*that is impossible*.” How striking! God has drawn a line of demarkation between His people and the children of the devil, which no human device can obliterate. God's “sheep” and Satan's “goats” may associate together, but there cannot

be any real fellowship between them: “What communion hath light with darkness”!

“The coat of the goat is both wool and hair. The wool is very valuable, and is used to make expensive shawls for 'noble' ladies: his hair is the well-known 'mohair.' The poor sheep produces only the common wool. The skin of the sheep is just 'basil,' the poorest of leather, used almost exclusively to make aprons for wagon-drivers. But the goat's, why his skin is the famous 'chami' leather, and is considered par excellence. Where are the gloves to compare with *kid* gloves?” How this illustrates *man's* respective estimates of real Christians and showy professors: the one is despised, the other highly esteemed.

“Goats do not like water, and to wash one is dangerous. I have done it, and even on a hot day they get cramp in the legs. A shower of rain is enough to drive them scampering for shelter, even from the most tempting meal.” How startling is this fact. There is nothing which empty professors detest more than experimental holiness. Preach to them of the imperative need *for their* fleshly ways to be cleansed, and they are at once offended: it is the last thing they want to hear about. How different with the sheep, who love the water!

“Goats are mostly 'kept up' here, chained to blackberry bushes, because they are the only animal which will eat them down. The 'thorns,' symbol of the curse, disappear shortly after mister goat has been chained to them, and are never seen again until the goat is removed or dies; then they come up worse than ever. He eats the tops off level with the ground, *but* the roots are still there, and spread, so that when his activities cease, they come up ten times worse.” So it is with most of modern evangelism; thousands of the unsaved are inclined to make a profession, and are hailed as “converts” (delivered from the curse), but “the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20). How often there is outward reformation (the thorn bush leveled with the ground), but no miracle of grace wrought *within*—the root of evil more active than ever.

“Goats are extremely devout, spending much time upon their knees. They always get down and go under a fence. If on a chain, no matter how long it is, they will get on their knees and strain hard to reach some thing beyond them.” It is because of their religiousness that empty professors deceive so many—very often themselves included. It is not praying which proves I am a child of God, but the getting of real and miraculous answers to prayer which evidences I have the ear of my heavenly Father. How few can endure *that* test!

“They are fond of company, no matter what sort it is, for they *hate to be alone.*” This is a sure mark of an empty professor: company, excitement, a ceaseless whirl of activity, rushing from one meeting to another, gadding about and visiting all who will gossip with them, fill up all their “spare hours.” Their *consciences* will not allow them to engage in quiet reflection and meditation, still less do they cultivate getting alone with God and communing with Him.

“Nearly all creatures are afraid of *fire*: even lions and tigers may be driven off by a fire-stick. But not so with goats. I have seen them walk into the fire. I have seen the same goat jump into the fire several times and be burned. I believe that is why we are told in Matthew 25:41 that Christ will yet say to the goats '*Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire,*' not as in the case of the guest without a wedding

garment 'cast him into.'" How solemnly true is this of the religious goats. The most awful sermon of Eternal Punishment stirs them not, for they are quite sure that *they* will never experience it. So completely has Satan lulled them to sleep that they have no dread of the awful doom which is most surely awaiting them.

“Yet they are afraid of death! A sheep is very submissive in death: it does not kick, or even attempt to run away. But the goat cries loudly for nothing, before he is hurt. In death he kicks like an infernal machine, and must have at least three legs tied if he is to be killed in the same manner as a sheep.” The writer has long been impressed with the fact that the majority of those who seem to be surest of their own salvation are the most *reluctant* to die; yea, they are terrified at the very thought of it. Few of them would acknowledge it, and many cloake it under the claim that they are looking for the return of Christ.

“They have a most offensive smell, as bad as swine, especially the *billy* goat”—figure of an unregenerate preacher. Yes, no matter how loud their profession, how fine their words, how devout the demeanor of the religious goats, they are a stench in the nostrils of Him who requireth truth in the *inward* parts. And the more a real Christian is in communion with God, walking closely with Him, the more will the “goats,” the religious hypocrites of the day, disgust and nauseate him—far more so than open worldlings who make no profession at all. The above-mentioned characteristics of the natural goats ought to make it much easier for the child of God to now *identify* the religious “goats” with whom he comes into contact.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1934

### Assurance

There come times when all your past experience seems taken away from you. You can't remember, at least you can't appropriate, you can't realize it. It is as though we had never ate and drank of what Christ gives us. We have no joy with which to rejoice. This is also an experience through which all God's people have come. This is the wonderful thing in the Prophets and Psalms: God does not put before us the image of His saints as they *ought* to be, but as they were—all their tears and failings and complaints and feelings of desertion and groanings.

I fear many things are said of assurance that never ought to have been said. It is very difficult to speak of assurance, so as not to distress the truly godly, and not to puff up those who think they are rich and have need of nothing. The Lord will satisfy the hungry; He will raise up those that are bowed down; He will feed them just because they are hungry; He will strengthen them, just because they are weak.

After Jacob had gained the victory over Jehovah and been called Israel, how did he go on all his life? Not as a hero triumphant, but he went halting. Many would like always to be singing “hallelujah”! to have entered already the land of promise and glory, to put aside the weapons of their conflict. So was it not with the old saints. Don't you be discouraged when you are weak, when you cry out of the depths in your helplessness, when you experience that there is another law, within you, striving against the Spirit of life within. The Lord is revealing to you your weakness and nothingness. (A. Saphir.)

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August, 1934

### A Word of Warning

“Take heed what ye hear” (Mark 4:24): the word “hear” obviously includes what is *read*, for that which is written or printed is addressed to the ears of our intellect. Few people today realize the urgent need for “taking heed” unto *what* they read. Just as the natural food which is eaten either helps or hinders the body, so the mental food we receive either benefits or injures the mind, and that, in turn, affects the heart. Now just as it is harmful to *listen* to the rubbish and poison which is being served from the great majority of present-day pulpits, so it is exceedingly injurious to the soul to read most of what is now being published. “Take *heed* what ye hear” and read. But let us seek to be more specific.

The only thing which is really worth calling “religion” is *the life of God in the soul*—commenced, carried on, and consummated solely by the Holy Spirit. Hence, whatever does not bear the impress of the Spirit's unction should be rejected by the saint: for not only can unctionless messages do us no good, but what proceeds not from the Spirit is of the flesh. Here, then, is the test which God's children ought to apply unto all they hear, and here is the balance in which they should weigh all that they read. True, there are varying degrees of the Spirit's unction: as it is in the natural so it is in the spiritual—there will be a varying amount of deposition from the faintest moisture of dew to the copious shower. As there had to be “salt” in every sacrifice (Lev. 2:13), so every discourse or article proceeding from the Spirit's aid is “seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). But O how very much today is *devoid of spiritual* savour and flavour!

Some of God's dear people may suppose that it would be presumptuous to set themselves up as *judges* of

what they hear or read, but that is a serious mistake, being both a false humility and a shirking of duty. The Apostle rebuked the Hebrews because their senses (spiritual faculties) *were not developed* so as to discern between good and evil (Heb. 5:13). With as much reason might it be termed pride for any one to pass judgment upon the groceries or meats purchased from the stores. Others may ask, "But how are simple and unlearned souls to distinguish between the different religious publications of the day?" Very simply: in sampling your natural food how do you determine whether or not it be *seasoned*? By your natural taste, of course. So it is spiritually: the "new man" *has a palate too!* If the God of creation has given us natural palates for the purpose of distinguishing between wholesome and unwholesome food, the God of grace has furnished His people with a capacity, a spiritual sense, to distinguish between nutritious and innutritious soul food.

"For the ear *trieth* words, as the mouth tasteth meat" (Job 34:3). Does *yours*, my reader? Are you as careful about what you take into your mind as what you take into your stomach? You certainly ought to be, for the former is even more important than the latter. If you eat some material food which is injurious, you can take a purgative and get rid of the same; but if you have devoured mental food which is injurious, it *stays with you!* "For the ear trieth words, as the mouth tasteth food." Again, we ask, Does *yours*, dear reader? Are you learning to distinguish between "letter" and "spirit," between the "form" and the "power," between that which is of the earth and that which is from Heaven, between that which is lifeless and ununctionless and that which is instinct with the breath of God? If the answer be No, then you are greatly the loser.

How many of God's dear children listen to the automaton "letter" preachers of today, and yet find nothing suited to the needs of their poor souls! And how many are subscribing for one magazine after another, hoping to find that which will the better furnish them to fight the good fight of faith, only to be disappointed? What they hear and what they read does not penetrate and grip: it has *no power*: it neither breaks down nor lifts up: it produces neither godly sorrow nor godly joy. The messages they hear or read fall upon their ear like an idle or twice-told tale: it completely fails *to reach their case* or minister to their needs. They are no better off after hearing a hundred such "sermons" or reading through a hundred such periodicals than they were at the beginning: they are no farther from the world and no nearer unto God.

It is often a long time before God's children are able to account for this. They *blame themselves*: they are exceedingly loath to say, "This message *is not of God.*" They are afraid to act in the spiritual as they do in the natural, and condemn and discard that which is worthless. While they feel a *lack of power* in the sermons they hear or the articles they read, and while their souls steadily get dried up like a potsherd, they are slow to realize that this is *the inevitable effect* of the ununctionless preaching they listen to or the ununctionless matter they read, and that such dryness and leanness of soul is *inevitable* by their association with unhumiliated and empty professors. But in due time God opens their eyes, and they see through the flimsy vail and discover that both the sermons they hear and the literature they read are only the product of a *dead* profession.

Ah, it is a great thing when once the Holy Spirit teaches a soul that it is *power* which is lacking from the lifeless preaching and lifeless articles of dead professors. It is *power* which the renewed soul seeks: a message which has power to search his conscience, to pierce him to the quick, to write it upon his *heart*; a

message which has power to bring him to his knees in broken-hearted confession to God; a message which has power to make him *feel* that *he is* “vile”; a message which has power to drive him to *Christ*, for the binding up of his wounds, for Him to pour in “oil and wine,” and send him on his way rejoicing. Yes, what the *renewed* soul longs for (though at first he knows it not) is that Divine message which comes to him “not in word only, but also *in power*” (1 Thess. 1:5).

Sooner or later, every member of the Body of Christ comes to value “power,” and to *count as worthless whatever lacks it*. It is by Divine power he is taught in his own soul, by which he is made to feel acutely his sinnership, his carnality, his beggarliness. It is Divine power working in his heart—the *same* power which brought Christ again from the dead (Eph. 1:19, 20)—which draws his affections unto things above and makes his soul pant after God “as the hart panteth after the water brooks” (Psa. 42:1). It is this Divine power working in him which reveals to his burdened spirit the Throne of Grace, and causes him to implore mercy and to seek grace “to help in time of need.” It is this Divine power working in him which makes him cry “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments; for therein do I delight. Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies, and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:35, 36).

They who are partakers of this Divine power (and they are *few* in number) can never be satisfied with a powerless ministry, either oral or written. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh” (Rom. 8:5), and are charmed with oratorical eloquence, catchy sayings, witty allusions, and jocular interspersions: on just such “husks” do the religious “swine” feed; but the penitent prodigal can find no nutriment therein! Men “of the world”—and they may be graduates from some “Bible Institute” or possessors of a diploma from some seminary, now styling themselves “preachers of the Gospel”—will speak of the things of the world (varnishing it over by denominating them “signs of the times”) and “the world heareth them” (1 John 4:5). But those who are seeking to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling” obtain no help therefrom, yea, they perceive clearly that such sermons and periodicals are “broken cisterns, that can hold *no water*” (Jer. 2:13).

“*Take heed what ye hear and read!* More than forty years ago the saintly Adolph Saphir wrote, “I think the fewer books we read the better: it is like times of cholera, when we should only drink filtered water.” What would he say if he were on earth today and glanced over the deadly poison sent forth by the heterodox and the lifeless rubbish put out by the orthodox? Christian reader, if you value the health of your soul, cease hearing and quit reading all that is lifeless, ununctionless, powerless, no matter what prominent or popular name be attached thereto. Life is too short to waste valuable time on that which profits not. Ninety-nine out of every hundred of the religious books, booklets, and magazines now being published are not worth the paper on which they are printed.

To turn away from the lifeless preachers and publishers of the day may involve a real cross. Your motives will be misconstrued, your words perverted, and your actions misinterpreted. The sharp arrows of false report will be directed against you: you will be called proud and self-righteous because you refuse to fellowship empty professors. You will be termed censorious and bitter if you condemn in plain speech the subtle delusions of Satan. You will be dubbed narrowminded and uncharitable because you refuse to join in singing the praises of the “great” and “popular” men of the day. More and more you will be made to painfully realize that the path which leadeth unto Life *is* “narrow” and that FEW there be that find it. The

Lord be pleased to grant unto each of us the hearing ear and obedient heart: “*Take heed* what ye hear” and *read!*—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1934

### Poor Yet Rich

One of the prayers which the Lord teaches His people to pray is, “Bow down Thine ear, O LORD, hear me: *for* I am poor and needy” (Psa. 86:1). Empty professors filled with pride, by their very attitude and actions, boast that they are “rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev. 3:17). But the real child of God, whose eyes have been opened by the Holy Spirit to see his utter worthlessness, freely acknowledges that he *is* (in himself) “poor and needy”; and the Lord Jesus declares “*Blessed are the poor in spirit*” (Matt. 5:3). May more of *this* poverty be our felt portion.

Above we have said that the child of God is *in himself* “poor and needy”: that is a most necessary qualification, for *in Christ* he is rich and possesses all things (1 Cor. 3:21). In Christ there is an infinite “fulness,” and it is the office and work of faith to draw upon and draw from the same. It is the Christian's unspeakable privilege to recognize that he *is now* (not simply will be in Heaven) a “joint-heir” with Christ. It is his glorious privilege to perceive that Christ is the *Head* of His people, and as a wife turns to her husband for money to meet the household expenses, so His Spouse should *act* toward her Husband—coming to Him for counsel, help, supplies of need, *in full confidence* that *His* love will freely bestow them.

Thus we have sought, again, to preserve the *balance* of Truth. Not until we are made to feel anew our emptiness, nothingness, sinfulness, woe-begone condition, shall we continue to turn unto Him whose exhaustless riches are ever available when the empty hand of *faith* is extended toward Him. Alas, so many

of His dear people have been left with the impression (if not expressly taught so) that there is nothing better for them, while here in this wilderness, than to feel their helplessness and groan over their wretchedness, remaining spiritual paupers to the end of their journey. No doubt *that* is greatly to be preferred to the self-sufficiency and self-righteousness of the bloated and Satan-deceived “free-willers.” Yes, indeed; a million times better for any of us to lie wounded, stripped, groaning, and *half*-dead by the wayside, than be left by God *wholly* dead in a state of carnal complacency. And yet, beloved, it is far from glorifying to the Lord, as it is far from our entering into the Inheritance which is now ours, to be the helpless “victim of circumstances,” the captive of the flesh, or the doormat of Satan.

*Daily living by faith on Christ* is what makes the difference between the sickly and the healthy Christian, between the defeated and the victorious saint. Not that we are suggesting it is possible for any of us to attain a state or experience where we are no longer tripped up by Satan, or wounded by the flesh. No; but rather that the Christian should refuse to *continue* in that wounded state *and go on* lying on the ground moaning and groaning. Our duty is to *search out* what it was in us which gave Satan the occasion *to* trip us up and the flesh to wound us; confess it to God, put it under the Blood, and seek grace to enable us to be more watchful against a repetition of the same. We should eye the all-sufficient Atonement, count upon its efficacy to *cleanse from* the guilt and defilement of the fall we experienced; and having put the matter right with God refuse to allow it now to hinder our communion with Him—our free approaches unto and our delighting ourselves in His promises.

Does the reader say, in answer to what has just been said, “That is easier said than done.” Of course, for all “doing” requires *effort!* After the confession of a failure and fall, a feeling of shame and heaviness frequently oppresses the soul and makes it exceedingly difficult to approach the Holy One with filial freedom. What then is to be done? This: begin by *thanking* God for the marvelous grace which has made such full provision for our wretched failures: *praise* Him for laying *all* your sins upon Christ. Then what? Why, *continue praising* Him that the blood of Christ is of such amazing potency, of such infinite efficacy, that it “cleanseth us from all sin.” Bless the God of all grace that He invites needy souls to come to His throne for *mercy*. That, my Christian reader, is the way to overcome heaviness of soul when filled with shame (after confession), and the way to overcome Satan's efforts to keep you depressed: *thanksgivings and praises* for the provisions of mercy for *failing* saints will give “freedom of access” and restore unto the joy of communion quicker than anything.

It is written “the *joy* of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). There can be no spiritual energy for the cheerful performance of duty, no buoyant heart for the trials of life, unless the joy of the Lord fills the soul. It was by the “joy that was set before Him” that Christ “endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). True, He was “the Man of Sorrows,” and “acquainted with grief” to an extent which none of us ever are; yet those sorrows did not incapacitate Him for attending to His Father's business: that deep “grief” hindered Him not from daily going about “doing good.” No, there was a “joy” which sustained, which nerved, which energised Him for the doing of God's will. And beloved fellow-pilgrim—groaning it may be over vile corruptions felt within, or disheartened and dismayed by the multiplying difficulties and obstacles without—that blessed One is still saying “If any man thirst, (for joy, or any spiritual grace) let him come *unto Me*, and DRINK” (John 7:37)—draw from My fulness.

It is striking to observe *the setting* of these words “the joy of the LORD is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). They were spoken to the godly remnant in a “day of small things.” That remnant had listened to the reading and expounding of the law (Neh. 8:7, 8). As they listened, they were rebuked, reprovved, condemned; and, in consequence “*all* the people *wept* when they heard the words of the law.” That was startling, unusual, blessed: to behold a contrite and broken-hearted people is both a rare and precious sight. But were they to *continue* thus? lying in the dust sobbing and groaning? No, to *them* the words came “Neither be ye sorrowful”—dry up your tears, “for the joy of the LORD is your strength.” There is “a time to weep” and there is also “a time to laugh”; “a time to mourn, *and* a time to dance” (Eccl. 3:4)! After grief for sin there should be joy for forgiveness.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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September, 1934

### **Divine Guidance**

It is well for those who are sensible of their own weakness and fallibility, and of the difficulties with which they are surrounded in life, that the Lord has promised to guide His people with His eye, and to cause them to hear a word behind them, saying, "This is the way, walk ye in it," when they are in danger of turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. For this purpose He has given us the written Word to be a lamp to our feet; and encouraged us to pray for the teaching of His Holy Spirit, that we may rightly understand and apply it. It is, however, too often seen, that many widely deviate from the path of duty, and commit gross and perplexing mistakes, while they profess a sincere desire to know the will of God, and think they have His warrant and authority. This must certainly be owing to misapplication of the rule by which they judge, since the rule itself is infallible, and the promise sure. The Scriptures cannot deceive us if rightly understood; but they may, if perverted, prove the occasion of confirming us in a mistake. The Holy Spirit cannot mislead those who are under His influence; but we may suppose that we are so, when we are not. It may not be unseasonable to offer a few thoughts upon a subject of great importance to the peace of our minds, and to the honour of our holy profession.

Many have been deceived as to what they ought to do, or in forming a judgment beforehand of events in which they are nearly (closely) concerned, by expecting direction in ways which the Lord has not warranted. I shall mention some of the principal of these, for it is not easy to enumerate them all.

Some persons, when two or more things have been in view, and they could not immediately determine

which to prefer, have committed their case to the Lord by prayer, and have proceeded to cast lots: taking it for granted, that after such a solemn appeal, the turning up of the lot might be safely rested in as an answer from God. It is true, the Scripture, and, indeed, right reason assures us, that the Lord disposes the lot; and there are several cases recorded in the Old Testament, in which lots were used by Divine appointment; but I think neither these, nor the choosing Matthias by lot to the Apostleship, are proper precedents for our conduct. In the division of the land of Canaan, in the affair of Achan, and in the nomination of Saul to the kingdom, recourse was had to lots by God's express command. The instance of Matthias likewise was singular, such as can never happen again, namely, the choice of an Apostle, who would not have been on a par with the rest, who were chosen immediately by the Lord, unless He had been pleased to interpose in some extraordinary way; and all these were before the canon of Scripture was completed, and before the full descent and communication of the Holy Spirit, who was promised to dwell with the church to the end of time. Under the New Testament dispensation, we are invited to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, to make our request known to the Lord, and to cast our cares upon Him; but we have neither precept or promise respecting the use of lots; and to have recourse to them without His appointment, seems to be tempting Him rather than honouring Him, and to savour more of presumption than dependence. The effects likewise of this expedient have often been unhappy and hurtful. A sufficient proof how little it is to be trusted to as a guide of our conduct.

Others, when in doubt, have opened the Bible at a venture, and expected to find something to direct them in the first verse they should cast their eye upon. It is no small discredit to their practice, that the heathens who knew not the Bible, used some of their favourite books in the same way; and grounded their persuasions of what they ought to do, or what should befall them, according to the passage they happened to open upon. Among the Romans, the writings of Virgil were frequently consulted upon these occasions; which gave rise to the well-known expression of the *Sortes Virgilinae*. And indeed Virgil is as well adapted to satisfy inquiries in this way, as the Bible itself; for if people will be governed by the occurrence of a single text of Scripture, without regarding the context, or duly comparing it with the general tenor of the Word of God, and with their own circumstances, they may commit the greatest extravagancies, expect the greatest impossibilities, and contradict the plainest dictates of common sense, while they think they have the Word of God on their side. Can the opening upon 2 Samuel 7:3, when Nathan said unto David, "Do all that is in thine heart; for the LORD is with thee," be sufficient to determine the lawfulness or expediency of actions? Or can a glance of the eye upon our Lord's words to the woman of Canaan, "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt" (Matt. 15:28), amount to a proof, that the present earnest desire of the mind (whatever it may be) shall be surely accomplished? Yet it is certain that matters, big with important consequences, have been engaged in, and the most sanguine expectations formed, upon no better warrant than dipping (as it is called) upon a text of Scripture.

A sudden strong impression of a text, that seems to have some resemblance to the concern upon the mind, has been accepted by many as an infallible token that they were right, and that things would go just as they would have them; or, on the other hand, if the passage bore a threatening aspect, it has filled them with fears and disquietudes, which they have afterwards found were groundless and unnecessary. These impressions, being more out of their power than their former method, have been generally regarded and trusted to, but have frequently proved no less delusive. It is allowed that such impressions of a precept or a promise, as humble, animate, may comfort the soul by giving it a lively sense of the truth contained in the

words, and are both profitable and pleasant: and many of the Lord's people have been instructed and supported (especially in a time of trouble) by some seasonable word of grace applied and sealed by His Spirit with power to their hearts. But if impressions or impulses are received as a voice from Heaven, directing to such particular actions as could not be proved to be duties without them, a person may be inwardly misled into great evils, and gross delusions; and many have been so. There is no doubt but the enemy of our souls, if permitted, can furnish us with Scriptures in abundance in this way, and for these purposes.

Some persons judge of the nature and event of their designs by the freedom which they find in prayer. They say they commit their ways to God, seek His direction, and are favoured with much enlargement of spirit; and therefore they cannot doubt but what they have in view is acceptable in the Lord's sight. I would not absolutely reject every plea of this kind, yet without other corroborating evidence I could not admit it in proof of what it is brought for. It is not always easy to determine when we have spiritual freedom in prayer. Self is deceitful; and when our hearts are much fixed and bent upon a thing, this may put words and earnestness into our mouths. Too often we first secretly determine for ourselves, and then come to ask counsel of God; in such a disposition we are ready to catch at everything that may seem to favour our darling scheme: and the Lord, for the detecting and chastisement of our hypocrisy (for hypocrisy it is, though perhaps hardly perceptible to our selves), may answer us according to our idols: see Ezekiel 14:3, 4. Besides, the grace of prayer may be in exercise when the subject-matter of the prayer may be founded upon a mistake, from the intervention of circumstances which we are unacquainted with. Thus, I may have a friend in a distant country: I hope he is alive, I pray for him, and it is my duty to do so. The Lord, by His Spirit, assists His people in what is their present duty. If I am enabled to pray with much liberty for my distant friend, it may be a proof that the Spirit of the Lord is pleased to assist my infirmities, but it is no proof that my friend is certainly alive at the time I am praying for him: and if the next time I pray for him I should find my spirit straitened, I am not to conclude that my friend is dead, and therefore the Lord will not assist me in praying for him any longer.

Once more, a remarkable dream has sometimes been thought as decisive as any of the foregoing methods of knowing the will of God. That many wholesome and seasonable admonitions have been received in dreams, I willingly allow; but though they may be occasionally noticed, to pay a great attention to dreams, especially to be guided by them, to form our sentiments, conduct our expectations upon them, is superstitious and dangerous. The promises are not made to those who *dream*, but to those who *watch*.

Upon the whole, though the Lord may give to some persons, upon some occasions, a hint or encouragement out of the common way, yet expressly to look for and seek His direction in such things as I have mentioned is unscriptural and ensnaring. I could fill many sheets with a detail of the inconveniences and evils which have followed such a dependence, within the courts of my own observation. I have seen some presuming they were doing God's service while acting in contradiction to His express commands. I have known others infatuated to believe a lie, declaring themselves assured beyond the shadow of a doubt, of things which, after all, never came to pass; and, when at length disappointed, Satan has improved the occasion to make them doubt of the plainest and most important truths, and to account their whole former experience a delusion. By these things weak believers have been stumbled, cavils and offences against the Gospel multiplied, and the way of truth evil spoken of.

But how, then, may the Lord's guidance be expected? After what has been premised negatively, the question may be answered in a few words. In general, He guides and directs His people by affording them, in answer to prayer, the light of His Holy Spirit, which enables them to understand and to live the Scriptures. The Word of God is not to be used as a lottery, nor is it designed to instruct us by shreds and scraps, which, detached from their proper places, have no determined import; but it is to furnish us with just *principles*, right *apprehensions*, to regulate our judgments and affections, and thereby to influence and regulate our conduct. They who study the Scriptures in an humble dependence upon Divine teaching, are convinced of their own weakness, are taught to make a true estimate of everything around them, are gradually formed into a spirit of submission to the will of God, discover the nature and duties of their several situations and relations in life, and the snares and temptations to which they are exposed. The Word of God dwelling richly in them is a preservative from error, a light to their feet, and a spring of strength and consolation. By treasuring up the doctrines, precepts, promises, examples, and exhortations of Scripture in their minds, and daily comparing them with the rule by which they walk, they grow into an habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquire a gracious taste, which enables them to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty, as a musical ear judges of sounds; and they are seldom mistaken, because they are influenced by the love of Christ which rules in their hearts, and a regard to the glory of God, which are the great objects they have in view.

In particular cases the Lord opens and shuts for them, breaks down walls of difficulty which obstruct their path, or hedges up their way with thorns, when they are in danger of going wrong, by the dispensations of His providence. They know that their concerns are in His hands; they are willing to follow whither and when He leads, but are afraid of going before Him. Therefore they are not impatient. Because they believe, they will not make haste, but wait daily upon Him in prayer; especially when they find their hearts most engaged in any purpose or pursuit, they are most jealous of being deceived by appearances, and dare not move farther or faster than they can perceive His light shining upon their paths. I express at least their *desire*, if not their *attainment*: thus they *would be*. And though there are seasons when faith languishes, and self too much prevails, this is their general disposition, and the Lord, whom they serve, does not disappoint their expectations: He leads them by a right way, preserves them from a thousand snares, and satisfies them that He is and will be their Guide even unto death.—John Newton (1770).

We heartily commend the above article to the careful attention of those who are exercised about the matter of Divine guidance. Its exposure of the foolish, fanatical and superstitious devices employed by not a few today, when they are undecided as to their line of duty, is timely. The positive side of the subject is capable of and probably needs some amplification, and we hope to write an article thereon for the next issue. The general rule or principle may be stated thus: if *we* are daily concerned in seeking to *please* God in all the details, great and small, of our lives, *He* will not leave us in ignorance of His will concerning us. But if we are accustomed to gratify self and only turn unto God for help in times of difficulty and emergency, then we must not be surprised if He mocks us, and allows us to reap the fruits of our own folly. Our business is to walk in obedient subjection to Christ, and His sure promise is “he that followeth *Me shall not walk in darkness*” (John 8:12). Make sure you are sincerely endeavoring *to* “follow” the “example” Christ has left us, and He will not leave you in ignorance or uncertainty as to which step you should take when you come to the parting of the ways.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### To a Stricken Soul

My dear Brother: Greetings in the precious name of Him who, in the supreme crisis of His life said, “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). Those words were uttered by the Lord Jesus on the night of His betrayal: the Cross and all it entailed was fully before His view. This sublime utterance of the Saviour's exhibits His absolute submission unto His Father's will, the total absence of resistance and murmuring. The words He uttered on that dark, dark night have been placed on record for our instruction, for He has left us “an example” that we should “follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). As we read these words “The cup which My Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?” they should be turned into humble and earnest prayer, that we may be permitted to enter more into the spirit of Christ, that Divine grace may be given us so that we shall be enabled to meekly acquiesce unto whatever our all-wise God may appoint.

It is in *heart-submission* to God's providential dealings with us that true religion largely consists. By nature man is born “like a wild ass's colt” (Job 11:12): he wants his own way in everything, and chafes and kicks when his will is crossed and his plans are thwarted. But where a Divine work of grace is wrought in the soul this spirit of rebellion against God is subdued, and the love of God is shed abroad in the heart. It is true the old spirit of insubordination is not entirely cast out: yea, it often makes its evil presence felt, for “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit” (Gal. 5:17). But the Christian strives against that hostile influence, turns to the Lord for help, and begs Him *to still* the storm going on within, and to bring him into submission.

Yours of April 30 to hand. My heart goes out to you in sympathy in this dark hour, and I feel my helplessness to comfort you. The loss you have sustained is far greater than any human creature can make up: your suffering too acute for any fellow-mortal to alleviate. I may endeavour to pour into your sorely-wounded heart something of “the balm of Gilead,” but only the great Physician can give any efficacy to the same. I can do little more than point you to Him who alone can “bind up the broken-hearted” (Isa. 61:1). Now is the time for you to *make free with Him*, for He is a “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother.” “Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7). Unburden yourself to Him, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

“Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication *with thanksgiving* let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). Observe well, dear Brother, the words, “With thanksgiving”—that should never be absent from our prayers even amid our acutest sorrows. *You* have much cause for “thanksgiving”: even amid your sobs and groans it is your privilege and duty to own God's great goodness to you. First, in having favoured you with one who was such a faithful wife and devoted mother to your children: *that* was “of the Lord,” and *His* hand should be duly acknowledged. It was purely of His distinguishing mercy that you were not plagued with a contentious, nagging, undutiful wife, such as thousands of men have. Own, then, unto the God of all grace His goodness, for a “prudent wife is from the Lord” (Prov. 19:14).

Second, you should present unfeigned “thanksgiving” unto God that He spared your beloved wife unto you for so many years. This, too, is entirely of His good pleasure. A parent, a wife, a child, is *loaned* to us for a season, and the One who gives decides for how long. Often the wife is removed from the husband quite early; often her life is taken in child-bearing. *You* have been highly favoured, and instead of dwelling exclusively on her *removal* from you, seek, dear Brother, to praise God for *sparing* her to you for so many years! It was a signal mercy and blessing that she remained until her children attained their majority. God might have called her years ago, and left you with motherless babes on your hands!

Third, if as your letter denotes, you have good ground to conclude your dear wife was one of the high favourites of Heaven—an elect, regenerated, and redeemed soul, trusting only in the merits of Christ for her acceptance with God—then you have abundant cause for “thanksgiving” that she has been removed from this wilderness of woe and translated to the Paradise of bliss! Think, then, not only of *your great loss*, but of *her immeasurable gain!* She is now done with sin and suffering forever. She is with the spirits of just men made perfect. She is in the immediate presence of the Lamb! Would you, if you could, call her back from Heaven itself to this sad world?

Fourth, what “thanksgiving” should ascend from your heart in the assurance that you have *not* parted to meet no more! It was thus that David found comfort when his dear child was taken from him: “I shall go to him” (2 Sam. 12:23). Only for a brief season at most will you be separated from your loved one. Ere long the call will come for you to join her in that Place where partings are no more. You shall be united with her again, not a few brief years, but *forever!* Let, then, this blissful prospect cheer your drooping heart. Dwell not on the *brief* period of separation, but on the *eternal* dwelling together on High.

But you are not in Heaven yet. No; God sees fit to leave you on earth a little longer. Why? To teach your heart some needed lessons, to bring good out of apparent evil, to make this sorrowful loss a real enrichment to your soul. *This* too is among the “all things” which work together for good to them that love God. If the Spirit of God is pleased to *sanctify* this affliction unto you, it will prove a real blessing in disguise. It is your duty and privilege *to ask* Him so to do: to beg Him to *bless* to you the chastening rod. May I suggest one or two lines of meditation which, if pursued by you and blessed to you by God, *will* enable you to improve this experience.

1. Learn anew *the terribleness of sin*. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned” (Rom. 5:12). Yes, had sin never entered this world, no graves had ever been dug in it. Every funeral should be a forceful reminder to us of what the Fall has brought in! Every funeral ought to beget in us a deeper hatred of sin. It was *sin* which necessitated the death of God's beloved Son. Then how we should loathe it, seek grace to resist its evil solicitations, and follow hard after its opposite—holiness.

2. See now the great importance of *holding with a light hand* all God's temporal mercies. The best of them are only loaned us for a season, and we know not how early we shall be called to relinquish them. It is the part of wisdom for us to recognize and remember this while they *are* in our hands: not to grasp them too tightly, nor to look upon them as ours to enjoy forever down here. Holy Writ bids us to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa. 2:11), for that which delights my heart this morning may be taken from me before the shades of night fall. The more I live with this fact before me, the less shall I feel the loss when it comes!

3. Endeavour to get your heart *more weaned from this perishing world*. “Set your affection on things above, *not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2). But we are slow to heed this exhortation, and often God has to use drastic means to bring us to a compliance with it. It is for our own good as well as His glory, that we do so. It is only the heavenly things that abide; then let us seek grace to have our hearts more and more set upon *them*.

“Change and decay in all around I see;  
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.”

4. Seek to demonstrate now to your fellows *the reality of true religion*. The test of a soldier is not while he is on parade, but when he enters the battle. So it is spiritually. In seasons of prosperity even the worldling is contented and happy, but in times of adversity it becomes evident that he knows nothing of the Source of real and lasting joy. Only the real child of God is enabled to say, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: *blessed be the name of the Lord*.” Earnestly seek supernatural help from above, dear Brother, that you may be enabled to manifest before your fellows the *sufficiency* of Divine grace to strengthen and support—to show you *do* have a peace and comfort which the Christless are strangers to.

Now, dear Brother, I have snatched several hours from a busy life to try and send you a few lines both of comfort and counsel. May it please the God of all grace to bless them to you. Read, and re-read what I have written, and above all turn it into definite prayer. Write me again when you feel like so doing. Sorrow not as others who have no hope. Doubt not the Lord's goodness. Look forward to the future, and it will

nerve you for the duties of the present. Assuring you again of my heart-felt sympathy, and of my poor prayers, I am, Yours by God's abounding mercy, A.W. Pink. Psalm 55:22.

The above is a copy of a letter which was sent to one who had suddenly been plunged into the deep waters of bereavement. We felt that perhaps its contents might be pertinent to the cases of others of our readers who have lately been called on by God to give up loved ones. May it also speak to those Christian husbands who still have their wives with them, and move them to treat their partners with that love, sympathy, patience, gentleness, considerateness, which is their due.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1934

### **Over-Righteous**

“Be not righteous over much” (Eccl. 7:16). Some of our readers may be surprised to discover that there *is* such a statement as this in Holy Writ, and at first glance consider it an exhortation we do not need. Yet on second thought they should perceive that their hasty conclusion was wrong, for there can be nothing in the imperishable Word of God which is superfluous, and no precept which we can dispense with without suffering loss. Even in this day of abounding lawlessness, of rapidly increasing moral laxity, when there is such an urgent need for pressing the righteous claims of God upon one another, the Christian requires to give careful heed to this word: “Be not righteous over much.” It is a question of sound interpretation, of rightly understanding the meaning and application of this Divine injunction. First, let us briefly point out what our text does not mean.

“Be not righteous over much.” Those words have often been quoted in the past by empty professors against those children of God whose conscientiousness and piety condemned their looseness. They have said, “I do not feel that such carefulness and preciseness are required of us; you are altogether too punctilious over trifles: why make yourself and all you come into contact with, miserable? what need is there for so much denying of self, separation from the world, and acting differently from other people?” They argue, “Christ did everything *for* us which God requires of us.” Anything which made real demands upon them, which called for the mortification of the flesh, for the laying aside of “every weight” which would hinder from running the race God has set before His people, they counted as “fanaticism,” “puritanic,” being “righteous over much.” And *their* tribe is not extinct! But such is obviously a perversion

of our text. We cannot love God too much, nor keep His precepts too diligently.

What, then, is the force of these words, “Be not righteous over much”? First, let it be duly observed that our text occurs in the *Old Testament*. The Lord God knew the temper of the Jews, their proneness to lean upon their own works and trust in the sufficiency of them to secure their acceptance before Him; therefore did He place this word on record to warn them against indulging in the spirit of self-destruction, against pretending unto a greater righteousness than they actually had. In this very same chapter, only two or three verses later, He tells them plainly, “There is not a just man upon earth that doeth good and sinneth not” (v. 20). Thus the righteousness of Another is absolutely indispensable if any sinner is to find acceptance with the thrice Holy God. Beware, then, of thinking more highly of yourself than you ought to think, and being proud in your own conceits. The need for such a word, and their utter disregard of it, was plainly evidenced by the self-righteous Pharisees of Christ's day, who trusted in their own performances and despised and rejected Him.

But the truly regenerated soul has been delivered from this fatal tendency of the unrenewed heart. He has been supernaturally enlightened and convicted by the Spirit of Truth. He has been shown how impossible it is *for him* to meet the high requirements of God, and has been made to feel that his best doings are but “filthy rags” in God's sight. What, then, is the legitimate application of this exhortation unto himself: “Be not righteous over much”? Answer: by assuming duties to which *God* has not called us, by undertaking austerities which *God* has not enjoined. We read of “the commandments and doctrines *of men*” with *their* “touch not, taste not, handle not” (Col. 2:21, 22), and to be brought under bondage to *them*, is being “righteous *over much*,” for it is going beyond what God Himself has prescribed for us.

The Jewish rabbies and scribes invented a vast number of traditions and ceremonies over and above what God commanded, supposing that by observing the same they were *holier* than others; and even condemned the Lord Jesus because He declined to observe their rules: see Mark 7:2, 5—and let it be duly observed that Christ and His disciples refused to heed *their* scruples, though He knew they would be “offended” or hurt! The same principle is operative among the poor Papists, with their invention of “works of supererogation”: the “celibacy” of their “priests,” their “Lenten fasts” etc. are examples. Nor is the same evil absent among Protestants: many of them have invented laws and rules, demanding that Christians totally abstain from some of the “all things” which God has given us richly “to *enjoy*” (1 Tim. 6:17), though not to abuse; compliance therewith is being “righteous” *over much!*

“Be not righteous over much.” This word has a manifold application to Christians today. Be not too rigorous in standing up for your “rights,” but “in love *serve* one another.” Refuse not to help the beast out of the pit, simply because he falls into one on the Sabbath day! Let your zeal in “service” be regulated by the rules of Holy Writ. Insist not upon your full “pound of flesh”: having received mercy of God, exercise mercy towards others. Beware of paying more attention to the outward forms of religion than to the cultivation of the heart. “There may be overdoing in well doing” (Matthew Henry): some have wrecked their constitutions by over-study, over-fasting, and by refusing lawful means. Nothing is required of us but what *God* has enjoined *in His Word*—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

November, 1934

### **Divine Guidance**

In the September issue we published an article upon “Divine Guidance” by the late John Newton, which dwelt more upon the negative side of the subject. In a footnote we suggested there was a need for an amplification of the positive aspect, and expressed our purpose of writing thereon. We here take up our pen to redeem that promise, as the Holy Spirit may be graciously pleased to help us therein. There are few subjects, bearing upon the practical side of the Christian life, that believers are more exercised about than that they may be “led of the Lord” in all their ways; yet when some important decision has to be made, they are often at a stand to know *how* “the Lord's mind” is to be obtained. We have read quite a number of tracts and booklets on this subject, but they were so general and vague that we obtained little or no light and help from them. This we find has been the experience of many others, and there certainly exists a real need today for some clear and definite article thereon.

For some years past the writer has been convinced that one thing which has contributed not a little unto the shrouding of this subject in mystery in the minds of many, is the loose and misleading terms which are generally employed by those referring thereto. While expressions are used as, “Is this according to God's will?,” “Do I have the prompting of the Holy Spirit?,” “Were you led of the Lord in that?” Simple minds will continue to be perplexed and never arrive at any certainty. So commonly are these expressions now used in religious circles, that probably quite a number of our readers will be surprised at our challenging of them. Let it be said that we certainly do not condemn such expressions as erroneous, rather do we wish to point out that they are too intangible for most people until they are more definitely defined.

What alternative, then, have we to suggest? This: in connection with every decision we make, every plan we form, every action we execute, let the question be put, *Is this in harmony with God's Word?* Is it what the Scriptures enjoin? Does it square with the Rule which God has given us to walk by? Is it in accord with the “example” which Christ has left us to follow? If it be in harmony with God's Word, then it *must* be “according to God's will,” for His will is revealed *in* His Word. If I am doing that which the Scriptures enjoin, then I *must be* “prompted by the Holy Spirit,” for He never moves any one to act contrary thereto. If my conduct squares with the Rule of Righteousness (the precepts and commands of the Word), then I *must be* “led of the Lord,” for He leads only into the “paths of righteousness” (Psa. 23:1, 3). A great deal of mystical vagueness and puzzling uncertainty will be removed if the reader substitutes for “Is this according to God's will?” the simpler and more tangible “Is this according to God's Word?”

God, in His infinite condescension and transcendent grace, has given us His Word for this very purpose: that we need not stumble along blindly, ignorant of what is pleasing or displeasing to Him, but that we might *know* His “mind.” That Divine Word is given to us not simply for information, but for the regulation of our conduct: to enlighten our minds, to mold our hearts, to direct all our conduct. That Divine Word supplies us with an unerring *chart* by which to steer through the dangerous sea of life, which if we sincerely and diligently follow, will deliver us from disastrous rocks and submerged reefs, and direct us safely to the Heavenly Harbour. In that Word is all the instructions we can need for every problem, every emergency we may be called upon to face. That Word has been given to us “that the man of God may be perfect, *thoroughly* furnished unto *all* good works” (2 Tim. 3:17). O how thankful and joyful we should be that the Triune God has favoured us with such a Word!

“Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105). The metaphor which is here used is taken from a man walking along a difficult and dangerous road on a dark night, in urgent need of a lantern to show him where to plant his feet, so that he may be able to journey along safely and comfortably, avoiding injury and destruction. The same figure is used again in the New Testament. “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). The “dark place” is this world, and it is only as we *take heed* to the Word, to the “light” God has given us that we shall be enabled to perceive and avoid the broad road which leadeth to destruction, and discern that narrow way which alone leadeth unto Life.

It is to be duly observed that the above verse plainly intimates that God has placed His Word in our hands for an intensely practical purpose, namely, for the directing of our *walk*, the regulating of our deportment. This at once shows us what is to be the first and principal use we are to make of this Divine gift. It would do a traveler little good to diligently scrutinize the mechanism of a lamp, or stand admiring its beautiful design; rather he is to take it up and make a practical *use* of the same. Many today are zealous in reading “the letter of Scripture,” and many are charmed with the evidences of its Divine Authorship, but how few appear to realize the primary purpose for which God has given the Scriptures, how few are making *a practical use* of them—ordering the details of their lives by its rules and regulations. They eulogize the Lamp, but they walk not by its light.

Our first need and task as little children was to learn to walk. The milk we received from our mothers was

but a means to an end: to nourish the infant's life, to strengthen its limbs so that they should be put to a practical use. So it is spiritually. When we have been born again and fed by the Spirit on the pure milk of the Word, our first need and task is to *learn to walk*, to walk as becometh the children of God; and this can be learned only as we ascertain our Father's will as it is revealed in Holy Writ. By nature we are in total ignorance of His will for us and of what promotes our highest interests. It is a solemn and very humbling fact that man is the only creature born into this world devoid of intelligence as to how to act, and needing to be taught what is evil and what is good for him.

All the lower orders of creation are endowed with an instinct which moves them to act discreetly, to avoid that which is harmful, and to follow that which is good. But not so man. Animals and birds require not to be taught which herbs and berries are poisonous and which are not: they need no curb placed upon them not to over eat or over drink—you cannot even force a horse or a cow to gorge and make itself sick. Even plants turn their faces to the light and open their mouths to catch the falling rain. But fallen man has not even the instinct of the brutes, and usually has to learn by painful experience what is harmful and injurious; and, as it has been well said, “Experience keeps an expensive school”—her fees are high. Alas that so many only discover this when it is too late: when they have wrecked their constitutions beyond repair, life's temporal interest beyond recovery.

It may be said in the answer to the above, But man is endowed with a *conscience*. True, and how far does it serve him till enlightened by the Word and convicted by the Spirit! Man's understanding has been so darkened by sin, and folly is so bound up in his heart from childhood (Prov. 22:15), that until he is instructed he knows not what God requires of him, nor what makes for his own highest good. That is why God has given us His Word: to make known what He justly demands of us, to inform us of those things which destroy the soul, to reveal the baits which Satan uses to capture and slay so many, to point out the highway of holiness which alone leadeth unto Heaven (Heb. 12:14), to acquaint us with those rules which *must* be observed if we are to enter and walk that highway.

Our first duty, then, and our first aim, must be to take up the Scriptures so as to ascertain what is God's revealed will for us, what are the paths He forbids us to walk in, what are the ways which are pleasing in His sight. Many things are prohibited in the Word which neither our reason nor our conscience would discover. For example, we learn that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15); that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” (James 4:4); that “he that hasteth with his feet sinneth” (Prov. 19:2). Many things are also there commanded which can only be known by acquainting ourselves with its contents. For example, “Lean not unto thine own understanding” (Prov. 3:5); “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help” (Psa. 146:3); “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44).

The above are but samples of hundreds of others. Now it is obvious that God's Word cannot be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path unless we are familiar with its contents, and particularly, until we are informed upon the *practical rules* which God has given us to walk by. Hence it should be equally obvious that the first need of the Christian is not to delve into the intricacies and mysteries of Scripture, study the prophecies, nor even entertain himself with the wonderful types therein; but rather to concentrate

on that which will instruct him as to the kind of conduct which will be *pleasing to the Lord*. The Holy Scriptures are given us, primarily, not for our intellectual gratification, nor for emotional admiration, but for life's regulation. Nor are the precepts and commands, the warnings and encouragements contained therein, simply for our information: they are to be reduced to practice, they require *unqualified obedience*.

“This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt *meditate* therein day and night, that thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way *prosperous*, and then thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:8). God will be no man's debtor: in keeping His commands there is “great reward” (Psa. 19:11). Part of that “reward” is a deliverance from being deceived by the false appearances of things, from forming erroneous estimates, from pursuing a foolish policy. Part of that “reward” is the acquiring of wisdom so that we choose that which is good, act prudently, and follow those paths which make for righteousness, peace and joy. He who treasures up in his heart the Divine precepts and diligently seeks to walk by their rule will escape those evils which destroy his fellows.

“If any man walk in the day, he stumbleth not, because he seeth the light of this world” (John 11:9). To “walk in the day” means to be in communion with Him who is Light, to conduct ourselves according to His revealed will. Just so far as the Christian walks in the path of duty as it is defined for him in the Word, will he walk surely and comfortably: by the light of that Word the way is plain before him, and he is preserved from falling over the obstacles by which Satan seeks to trip him up. “But if a man walk in the night, he stumbleth, because there is no light in him” (v. 10). Here is the solemn contrast: he who walks according to the dictates of his lusts, following the counsel and example of the ungodly, falls into the snares of the Devil, and perishes. There is “no light” in such an one, for he is not regulated by the Sun of Righteousness.

“I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12). It is one thing to have “life,” it is another thing to enjoy the “*light of life*”—that is only obtained by *following Christ*. Notice carefully the tense of the verb: it is not “he that follows Me,” occasionally and spasmodically: but “he that *followeth* Me,” which signifies a steady and continuous course of action; and the promise to *such* a one is, “he shall not walk in darkness.” But what does it mean to “follow” Christ? First and foremost, to be *emptied of self-will*, for “even Christ pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3). This is absolutely essential; self-will and self-pleasing *must be mortified* if I am to be delivered from walking in darkness.

The unchanging order is made known by Christ in Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” Christ cannot be followed until self is denied and the cross accepted as the distinguishing mark of discipleship. What does it mean to “deny self”? It means to repudiate our own goodness, to renounce our own wisdom, to have no confidence in our own strength, to completely set aside our own will and wishes, that we “should not henceforth live unto ourselves, but unto Him which died for us” (2 Cor. 5:15). What does it mean to “take up our cross”? It signifies a readiness to endure the world's hatred and scorn, to voluntarily surrender our lives unto God, to use all our faculties unto His glory. The “cross” stands for unreserved and loving obedience to the Lord, for of Him it is written that “He became obedient unto death, even the death of the

cross.” It is only as self with all its lustings and interests is denied, and as the heart is dominated by the spirit of Calvary, that we are prepared *to* “follow” Christ.

And what is signified *by* “follow” Christ? This: to take His “yoke” upon us (Matt. 11:29) and live in complete subjection to Him. It is to yield fully to His Lordship, to obey His commands, and thus truly *serve* Him. It is seeking to do only those things which are pleasing in His sight. It is to emulate the “example” which He has left us, and *He* was in *all things* subject to the Scriptures. And as we “follow” Him, we “shall not walk in darkness”: no, we shall be in happy fellowship with Him who is the “true light.” For our encouragement—for they were men of like passions with us—it is recorded of Caleb and Joshua “they have *wholly* followed the Lord” (Num. 32:12): having put their hand to the plow, they looked not back; consequently, instead of perishing in the wilderness with their disobedient fellows, they entered the promised land.

Thus the great business, the life-task of the Christian, is to regulate his life by and conform his conduct to the precepts of the written Word and the example left us by the incarnate Word. As he does so, in proportion as he does so, he is emancipated from the darkness of his natural mind, freed from the follies of his corrupt heart, delivered from the mad course of this world, and escapes the snares of the Devil. “Through knowledge shall the just be delivered” (Prov. 11:9). Yes, great is the “reward” of keeping God's commandments: “*Then* shalt thou understand righteousness, and judgment, and equity; yea, every good path. *When* wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul; *Discretion shall preserve thee*, understanding shall keep thee” (Prov. 2:9-11).—A.W.P.

(Continued in the December issue).

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1934

### Divine Guidance

“Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17). It is clear from this verse that it is both the right and the duty of the Christian to have a knowledge of the Lord's will for him. God can neither be pleased nor glorified by His children walking in ignorance or proceeding blindly. Did not Christ say to His beloved disciples, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15). If, then, we are in the dark as to how we ought to proceed in any thing, it is clear that we are living far below our privileges. No doubt the majority of our readers will give their hearty assent to these statements, but the question which concerns most of them is, *how* are we to *ascertain* the Lord's will concerning the varied details of our daily lives?

First, let it be duly observed this exhortation, that we should be understanding “*what* the will of the Lord is,” is preceded by “Wherefore be ye not unwise.” That word “unwise” does not here signify bare ignorance or lack of knowledge, otherwise the two halves of the verse would merely express the *same* thought in its negative and positive forms. No, the word “unwise” there means “lacking in common sense,” or as the R.V. renders it “be not ye *foolish*.” Nor does the word “foolish” signify no more than it now does in common speech: in Scripture the “fool” is not simply one who is mentally deficient, but is the man who leaves God out of his life, who acts *independently* of Him. This must be duly borne in mind as we seek to arrive at the meaning of the second half of Ephesians 5:17.

Let it also be carefully observed that Ephesians 5:17 opens with the word “Wherefore,” which points us back to what immediately precedes. There we read “See then that ye *walk circumspectly*, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil” (vv. 15, 16). Unless *those* exhortations are prayerfully and diligently heeded, it is impossible that we should be “*understanding* WHAT the will of the Lord *is*.” Unless our *walk* be right there can be no spiritual discernment of God's will for us. And this brings us back to the central thought of the preceding article. Our daily walk is to be ordered by God's Word, and in proportion as it is so shall we be kept in His will and preserved from folly and sin.

“A good understanding have all they that do his commandments” (Psa. 111:10). A “good understanding” may be defined as *spiritual instinct*. We all know what is meant by that “instinct” with which the Creator has endowed animals and birds: that inward faculty which prompts them to avoid danger and moves them to seek that which makes for their well being. Now man was, originally, endowed with a similar instinct, though of a far superior order to that possessed by the lower creatures. But at the Fall, he, to a large extent, lost it, and, as one generation of depraved beings has followed another, their “instinct” has become more and more weakened, until now we see the vast majority of our fellows conducting themselves with far less intelligence than do the beasts of the field—rushing madly to destruction, which the instinct of the brutes would avoid: acting foolishly, yea, madly, contrary even to “common sense,” conducting their affairs and concerns without discretion.

Now at regeneration God gives to His elect “the spirit . . . of a *sound* mind” (2 Tim. 1:7), but that “spirit” has to be cultivated, it needs training and directing. The necessary instruction for this is found in the Word. From that Word we may learn what are the things which will prove beneficial to us, and what be injurious; what things are to be sought after, and what avoided. As the precepts of Scripture are reduced to *practice* by us, and as its prohibitions and warnings are *heeded*, we are enabled to judge things in their true light, we are delivered from being deceived by false appearances, we are kept from making foolish “mistakes.” The closer we walk by the Word, the more fully will this prove to be the case with us: a “good judgment” or spiritual instinct will be formed within us, so that we shall conduct our affairs discreetly and adorn the doctrine we profess.

So highly does the saint prize this spiritual instinct or sound mind, that he prays “Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:66). He realizes that it can only be increased as he is *Divinely* “taught,” that is, by the Spirit applying the Word to his heart, opening to him its meaning, bringing it to his remembrance when needed, and enabling him to make a proper *use* of the same. But let it be duly noted that in this prayer the petition is backed up with a plea: “*for* I have believed Thy commandments”: “believed,” not merely by an intellectual assent, but approved with the affections. Only when *that* be truly the case is such a petition sincere. There is an inseparable connection between the two things: where God's commandments are loved by us, we can count upon Him teaching us “good judgment.”

As we have said above, the “fool” is not the mentally deficient, but the one who leaves God out of his thoughts and plans, who cares not whether his conduct pleases or displeases Him: the “fool” is a *Godless* person. Contrariwise, the “wise” (in Scripture) are not the highly intellectual or the brilliantly educated, but those who honestly seek to put God first in their hearts and lives. And God “honours” those who

honour Him (1 Sam. 2:30): He gives them “good judgment.” True, it is not acquired all in a day: it is “here a little and there a little.” Yet the more completely we are surrendered to God, the more the principles of His Word *regulate* our conduct, the swifter is our growth in spiritual wisdom. In saying that this “good judgment” is not acquired all at once, we do not mean that a whole lifetime has to be lived before it becomes ours—though, alas, this *is* often the case with many. No indeed; some who have been converted but two or three years are often more spiritual, godly, and possess more spiritual wisdom than those who have been converted years before them.

By treasuring up in his mind the doctrines, precepts, promises, exhortations, and warnings of Scripture, and by diligently comparing himself with the Rule by which he is to walk, the Christian grows into a habitual frame of spiritual wisdom, and acquires a gracious “*taste*” which enables him to judge of right and wrong with a degree of readiness and certainty as a musical ear judges sounds, so that he is rarely mistaken. He who has the Word *ruling* in his heart is influenced thereby in all his actions, and because the glory of God is the great aim which he has before him, he is not suffered to go far wrong. Moreover, God has promised to show Himself strong on the behalf of the one whose heart is perfect toward Him, and this He does by regulating His providences and causing all things to work together for his good.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22). This language is of course figurative, yet its meaning is not difficult to ascertain: what the eye is to the body, the heart is to the soul, for out of the heart are “the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The actions of the body are directed by the light received from the eye: if the eye be “single,” that is, sound and clear, perceiving objects as they really are, then the whole body has light for the directing of its members, and the man moves with safety and comfort. In like manner, if the heart be undivided, set on pleasing God in all things, then the soul has clear vision, discerning the true nature of things, forming a sound judgment of their worth, choosing wisely, and directing itself prudently. While the heart is right with God, the soul is endowed with spiritual wisdom so that there is full light for our path.

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). Here is the solemn contrast. If the vision of our bodily eye be defective, a cataract dimming it, then nothing is seen clearly, all is confusion, and the man stumbles as if in the dark, being continually liable to lose his way and run into danger. In like manner, where the heart be not right with God, where sin and self dominate, the whole soul is under the reigning power of darkness—native depravity; and in consequence, the judgment is blinded so that it cannot rightly discern between good and evil, cannot see through the gild of Satan's baits, and so is fatally deceived by them. The very “light” which *is* in fallen man, namely, his “reason,” is controlled by his lusts, so, *great* is his “darkness.”

It is to be noted that the verses we have just been considering were spoken by Christ immediately after what He had been saying in Matthew 6:19-21 concerning the right and wise laying up of treasures. It was as though He now anticipated and answered a question from His disciples: If it be so important and essential for us not to lay up treasures in earth, but to lay up for ourselves treasures in Heaven, then why is it that those men who are commonly regarded as the “shrewdest” and are considered by their fellows to be the most “successful,” seek after earthly treasures, rather than after Heavenly? To this Christ replied:

marvel not at this—they *cannot see* what they are doing: they are like blind men gathering pebbles supposing that they are valuable diamonds.

Much light does Christ here cast on what we now behold going on on every side. They who have set their hearts upon the things of time and sense, are but spending their energies for that which will stand them in no stead when they come to their deathbed, labouring for that which satisfieth not (Isa. 55:2); and the reason why they conduct themselves so insanely—pursuing so eagerly the pleasures of this world, which will bear nothing but bitter regrets in the world to come—is because their hearts are evil. *God* has no real place in their thoughts, and in consequence He gives them up to the spirit of madness. There must be the “single eye”—the heart set upon pleasing God—if the soul is to be filled with heavenly wisdom, which loves, seeks, and lays up heavenly things. That wisdom is something which no college or university can impart: it is “from above” (James 3:17).

It is also to be carefully observed that our Lord's teaching upon the “single eye” with the whole body “full of *light*,” and the “evil eye” with the whole body “full of darkness,” is immediately followed with, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24). This at once establishes the meaning of the preceding verses. Christ had been speaking (under a figure) of setting the Lord supremely before the heart, which necessarily involves the casting out of worldly things and fleshly considerations. Men think to compound with God and their lusts, God and mammon, God and worldly pleasures. No, says Christ: God will have all or nothing: he that serveth Him must serve Him *only* and *supremely*. Ah, my reader, are you willing to pay the necessary price to have *Divine* light on your path?

It is quite likely that not a few readers are disappointed at our method of treating this subject, that which has been said being very different from what the title led them to expect. Neither in the preceding article nor in this one have we attempted to enter into specific details and state how a person is to act when some difficult or sudden emergency confronts him; rather have we sought to treat of *basic principles* and thoroughly establish them. Though it might satisfy his curiosity, it would serve no good purpose for a teacher to explain an intricate problem in higher mathematics to a student who had not already mastered the elementary rules of arithmetic. So it would be out of place for us to have explained how particular cases and circumstances are to be dealt with before we have pressed those rules which must guide our general walk.

Thus far we have dealt with two chief things: the absolute necessity of being controlled by the Word of God without us, and the having a heart within which is single to God's glory and set upon pleasing Him, if we are to have the light of Heaven shining upon our earthly path. A third consideration must now engage our attention: *the help of the Holy Spirit*. But it is at this point we most need to be upon our guard, lest we lapse into a vague mysticism on the one hand, or become guilty of wild fanaticism on the other. Many have plunged into the most foolish and evil courses under the plea they were “prompted by the Spirit.” No doubt they *were* “prompted” by some “spirit,” but most certainly not by the *Holy Spirit*. HE never prompts to anything contrary to the Word. Our only safety is to impartially bring our inward impulses or promptings to the test of Holy Writ.

“For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the children of God” (Rom. 8:14). This Divine Guide is perfectly acquainted with the path which God has ordained for each celestial traveler: He is fully conversant with all its windings and narrowness, its intricacies and dangers. To be led by the Spirit is *to be under His government*. He perceives our temptations and weakness, knows our aspirations, hears our groans, and marks our strugglings after holiness. He knows when to supply a check, administer a rebuke, apply a promise, sympathize with a sorrow, strengthen a wavering purpose, confirm a fluctuating hope. The sure promise is, “He will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13): this He does by regulating our thoughts, affections and conduct; by opening our understandings to perceive the meaning of Scripture, applying it in power to the heart, enabling us to appropriate and reduce it to practice. Then let us each time we open the Sacred Volume, humbly and earnestly *seek* the aid of Him who inspired it.

It is to be noted that Romans 8:14 opens with the word “For,” the Apostle introducing a confirmation of what he had been affirming in the previous verses. They who “walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (v. 4), they who “mind the things of the Spirit” (v. 5), they who “through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body” (v. 13), are the ones who are “led by the Spirit.” As the “Spirit of holiness,” it is His aim to deepen the impress of the restored image of God in the soul, to increase our happiness by making us more holy. Thus *He* “leads” to nothing but what is sanctifying. The “Spirit guides” by subduing the power of indwelling sin, by weaning us from the world, by maintaining a tender conscience in us, by drawing out the heart to Christ, by causing us to live for Eternity.—A.W.P.

(Completed, God willing, in the January issue).

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1934

### Goats

A few months ago we published some notes upon goats sent us by a Brother in Australia. Several have written to say they were helped by the same. Not long since we wrote to Bro. Klooster, who is engaged in Gospel work in Holland, a land where goats are quite common among the poorer people. In the course of our letter to him, we mentioned that it was our growing conviction “the goats” of Matthew 25:33 etc. are professing Christians who are devoid of the life of God in their souls. His reply has still further strengthened our conviction, and from it we here extract some thoughts concerning these animals, as being an adumbration of those bearing the name of Christ who are strangers to His salvation.

Read Matthew 25:31-33. “It is plain from Scripture that the 'sheep' mentioned here are God's chosen people, who are washed in the blood of the Lamb, and have followed the great Shepherd (John 10:26-29). It is equally plain from the Scripture that the 'goats' are not atheists and others who repudiate the existence of the eternal God, but are those having 'a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof,' people ever learning and 'never able to come to the knowledge of the truth' (2 Tim. 3:5-7). Looking now at Matthew 25:44 we read that the goats shall answer Christ 'saying, *Lord*, when saw we Thee an hungered?' Only those spoken of in 2 Timothy 3:5; Jude 11 etc. will (even as the sheep, God's children) address Him as 'Lord.' Hereby they show their 'form of godliness' or outward resemblance to God's children, as at a distance goats resemble sheep in appearance and in the sound of their bleating. In Matthew 7:21-23 we read of this same religious people, with their 'form of godliness.'

“In Scripture the 'right hand' is always used as a symbol for the place of might, power, honor, protection and fellowship: read carefully Psalm 16:8, 9, 11; Mark 15:27; Galatians 2:9; Exodus 15:6. But the 'left hand' is a symbol of the place of inferiority, dishonour, folly. 'A wise man's heart is at his right hand; but a fool's heart at his *left*' (Eccl. 10:2). Ehud (Judg. 3:15-22) was left-handed, and a sneaking assassin. The seven hundred men spoken of in Judges 20:16 were all *left* handed, and brought certain destruction when used in fighting. In Ezekiel 16:46 we read of religious by apostate Samaria dwelling at Jerusalem's *left* hand—Sodom as her 'right hand' is to be exalted above her: Matthew 11:20-24.

“In connection with Matthew 25:33 we read in Ezekiel 34:17, 'Behold, I *judge between* cattle and cattle,' that is, between sheep and goats, for the very next sentence adds 'between the rams and the he-goats.' Reading the whole chapter carefully through, there is no doubt that the 'rams' speak of the teachers, leaders, pastors of the sheep; while the 'he-goats' are the false prophets (2 Peter 2:1-3), the 'hirelings' (John 10:12, 13) who catch and scatter the sheep.

“A *ram* has the same nature and taste as the sheep, only he is stronger, and their natural protector. A ram will never attack a man or animal, except he, or his sheep, are attacked. So the true undershepherd only attacks when the honour of his great Shepherd and His sheep are assailed: then, like the ram, he will fight even unto death. The *he-goat* has the same nature as the goats, only he is more fierce and destructive, and will attack without any provocation or need: so the false shepherds are constantly making onslaughts on the Truth, on Christ, and on His people.

“Therefore will I *save My flock*, and they shall no more be a prey; and I will *judge between* cattle and cattle' (Ezek. 34:22). 'He shall *separate* them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats . . . and those (the goats) shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous (the sheep) into life eternal' (Matt. 25:32, 46)”!!

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1935

### Union and Communion

*Introduction.*

The present writer has not a doubt in his mind that the subject of *spiritual union* is the most important, the most profound, and yes, the most blessed of any that is set forth in the sacred Scriptures; and yet, sad to say, there is hardly any which is now more generally neglected. The very expression “spiritual union” is unknown in most professing Christian circles, and even where it is employed it is given such a protracted meaning as to take in only a fragment of this precious truth. Probably its very profundity is the reason why it is so largely ignored in this superficial age. Yet there are still a few left who are anxious to enter into God's best and long for a fuller understanding of the deep things of the Spirit; and it is, principally, with these in mind that we take up this present series.

There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three Divine Persons in one Godhead: having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one Jehovah. Second, the union of the Divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the Church to Christ, He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form an exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all, because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other points of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us

thereon.

The most wonderful thing of all, and yet the greatest mystery, in the natural world, is a *union*, namely, that conjunction which God has made between mind and matter, the soul and the body. What finite intelligence would or could have conceived of the joining together of an immaterial spirit and a clod of clay! What so little alike as the soul and an organized piece of earth! Who had ever imagined such a thing as animate and thinking dust! or that a spirit should be so linked with and tied to a carnal body that while *that* is preserved in health, *it* cannot free itself! And yet there *is* a union, a real union, a personal union, between the soul and the body. But that is only a *natural* mystery, and falls immeasurably below the *sacred* mystery of the union between human beings and the Lord of Glory.

The Scriptures have much to say upon the union which exists between Christ and His people. “At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John 14:20). “He that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). “For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (Eph. 5:30, 32). What an astonishing thing it is that there should be a union between the Son of God and worms of the earth!—infinitely more so than if the king of Great Britain had married the poorest and ugliest woman in all his realm. How immeasurable is the distance between the Creator and the creature, between Deity and mortal man! How wonderful beyond words that sinful wretches should be made one with Him before whom the seraphim veil their faces and cry “holy, holy, holy!”

“The union of Christ to His people is an amazing subject. It is an eternal union; it is an union made known and enjoyed in time; it is an union which will be openly and manifestatively declared in all its glory and perfection in the latter day; it is a grace union; it is also a glory union. As it is the foundation of all the gracious actings of Christ towards His Church in a time state, so it is of all the glory He will put on His Church and communicate unto His people at the last day. I cannot but lament we are most of us so great strangers to these important and heavenly truths. Depend on it, *we are great losers hereby*. The people of God lose much because they neglect truths of the greatest importance. In the present day they are too neglectful of important truths. They are willingly ignorant of them.

“We treat the Scriptures in the present day as though the less we know of the deep things of God, so much the better. Alas! alas! this, let us think of it as we may, is to cast contempt on God Himself. Nor will it serve to say we do not so mean or intend. It is a matter of fact, we are too neglectful of those Divine Truths and doctrines which concern the glory of Christ. The ancient and glorious settlements of grace are too little in our thoughts. It is sensibly felt, and by some very expressively confessed and acknowledged, that the influences of the Holy Spirit are very greatly suspended. Yet *the cause* is overlooked. Most assuredly one grand reason why we have so little of His sacred presence with us, and His power and influence manifested amongst us may be laid to the account of neglecting to preach supernatural, spiritual truth, and the mysteries of the everlasting Gospel” (S.E. Pierce, 1812).

The vital importance of this subject of the union of the Church to Christ may be clearly seen from the place which it occupies in the High Priestly prayer of Christ. “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may *be one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me,

and I in Thee” (John 17:20, 21). Our Lord here began His prayer for the whole body of His people by speaking of the union which they had with Him and His Father in Him, and He spends the verses which follow in expressing the blessings which follow as the fruits thereof. We are *not* to conceive that Christ here prayed for an union *to be* brought about or obtained; no, for it *was* established from all eternity: rather was He praying that His beloved might be blest with the clear knowledge of it, so that they might enjoy all the benefits of the same in their own souls.

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may *be one*, even as We are one” (John 17:22). This subject of the union between Himself and the elect was truly sweet and blessed to the heart of Christ. He knew that the knowledge and use of it is of great value and service to His people, therefore did He speak of it again and again that His saints in all ages might receive the knowledge of it into their minds and enjoy in their hearts the blessings contained in it. And, my readers, if Christ Himself esteemed this truth of union with Himself as a foundation truth, *we* should learn to think of it so also. We should bring ourselves unto the closest and prayerful study of the same, for by it our faith and hope are sustained and kept in exercise on God our Saviour.

“And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may *be one*, even as We are one.” This petition is the very centre of Christ's prayer, expressing the supreme desire of the Saviour's mind towards His redeemed: it summed up the uttermost longing of His heart toward them. The union about which He prayed is such that thereby the Father and the Son dwell in us and we in Them. It is such that the elect are so joined unto God and His Christ that it is the very highest union which the elect are capable of. It is the chiefest and greatest of all blessings, being the foundation from which all others proceed.

“I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect *in one*” (v. 23). A great variety of blessings are set before us in the Gospel. Salvation is an unspeakable one, yet not so great as our union to the Person of Christ. If we had not been united to Christ, He had not been our Saviour: it was because we stood eternally related to Him that He was most graciously pleased to undertake for us. The grace of justification is an unspeakable blessing, yet not so great as that of union, because the effect can never be equal to the cause which produces it. To be *in Christ* must exceed all the blessings which flow *from* Him which we have or ever shall partake of, either on earth or in Heaven. Communion with Christ is unspeakably blessed, yet not so great as *union*, for our union is the foundation of all communion. It is the greatest of all those super-creation “spiritual blessings” (Eph. 1:3) which the Father bestowed on the Church before sin entered the universe. It is the fruit of God's eternal love to His people.

Union with Christ is the foundation of all spiritual blessings, so that if there had been no *connection with* Him, there could be no regeneration, no justification, no sanctification, no glorification. It is so in the natural world—adumbrating the spiritual: sever one of the members from my physical body, and it is dead; only by its union with my person does it partake of life. “God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9): the word “fellowship” signifies such a co-partnership between persons that they have a joint interest in one and the same enjoyment which is common between them. Now this fellowship or communion with Christ is entirely dependent upon our *union with* Him, even as much as the branch's participation of the sap and juice is dependent upon its union and coalition with the stock of the tree. Take away union, and there can neither be communion nor

communication.

As it is for Christ's sake that God bestows upon His people all the blessings of salvation, so according to His eternal constitution those blessings could only be enjoyed in a state of communion with Him. The varied character of that communion it will be our joy to unfold, as the blessed Spirit is pleased to enable us, in the articles which follow. But the foundation of that vital, spiritual, and experimental union which the saints have with their Beloved in a time state and which they will enjoy forever in Heaven, was laid by God in that mystical union which He established between the Mediator and His elect before the foundation of the world, when He appointed Him to be the Head and they the members of His body: when God gave Christ to them and gave them to Christ in everlasting marriage.

In consequence of God's having given the Church to Christ in marriage before the foundation of the world, He says to His people, “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies” (Hosea 2:19); “thy Maker is thine Husband” (Isa. 54:5). And therefore does the Church exclaim, “My Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song. 2:16). “Consider the closeness and intimacy of the union between Him and them, and let this encourage thee to lean and live on Him by faith. It is far more intimate and dear than the union between husband and wife among men, for they are indeed 'one flesh,' but He is 'one body' and 'one spirit' (1 Cor. 6:20) with His spouse; He is in *them*, and they are in *Him*. And by virtue of this intimate union, thou hast a title to Him and to His whole purchase (Eben. Erskine, 1775).

In consequence of this eternal marriage-union between Christ and His Church there is a communion of names. In Jeremiah 23:6 we read, “And this is His name whereby *He* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and in Jeremiah 33:16 we are told, “And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness”—this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the Church is actually designated “the Christ,” while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24 the Head and His Church forming one body are conjointly referred to as “Christ”; hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the Church, its Head protested, “Why persecutest thou *Me*?” (Acts 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people: in Galatians 6:16 the Church is denominated, “the *Israel* of God,” while in Isaiah 49:3 we hear God saying *to the Mediator* “Thou art My servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified”!

Unspeakably precious is this aspect of our wonderful subject. In Colossians 3:12 Christians are exhorted to “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.” Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are “the elect of God” because *He* is God's “Elect” (Isa. 42:1); they are “holy” because conjoined to God's “Holy One” (Psa. 16:10); they are “beloved” because married to Him of whom the Father says, “This is My Beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17). Again, we are told that God “hath made *us kings and priests*” (Rev. 1:5), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is “the King of kings” and the “great High Priest.” Is Christ called “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2)? so we are told, “Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare “I am the rose of Sharon” (Song. 2:1)? then He promises of the redeemed “The desert (their fruitless state by nature) shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*” (Isa. 35:1)—the only two occasions the “rose” is mentioned in Holy Writ!

The union between Christ and His Church is so real, so vital, so intimate that God has never viewed the one apart from the other. There is such an indissoluble oneness between the Redeemer and the redeemed, such an absolute identification of interest between them, that the Father of mercies never saw them apart: He never saw Christ *as* “Christ” without seeing His mystical body; He never saw the Church apart from its Head. Therefore the Holy Spirit has delighted to emphasise this wondrous and glorious fact in many Scriptures. In connection with Christ's birth we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same” (Heb. 2:14). Further, we are told, “In whom also *ye* are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision *of Christ*” (Col. 2:11)—His actual circumcision was our mystical circumcision. At His baptism Christ was “numbered *with* the transgressors,” and hence, speaking as the Representative of the entire election of grace, He said, “Thus it becometh *us* (not simply “Me”) to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15).

We are told that when the Saviour was nailed to the tree “our old man was *crucified with Him*” (Rom. 6:6). We are told that when He expired at Calvary “if One died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14). We are told that when He was revived, we were “quicken’d *together with Christ*” (Eph. 2:5). He did not rise again as a single and private person, but as the Head of His Church: “ye then be risen *with Christ*” (Col. 3:1). Nor is that all: in Ephesians 2:6 we are told, “And hath raised us up together, and made us *sit together* in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.” O how surpassingly wonderful is the Christian's oneness with Christ: “Because *as He is, so are we in this world*” (1 John 4:17). When Christ appears in glory it will not be alone: “Then shall ye also appear *with him* in glory” (Col. 3:4).—A.W.P.

“One in the tomb; one when He rose;  
 One when He triumph'd o'er His foes;  
 One in Heaven He took His seat,  
 While seraphs sang all Hell's defeat.  
 With Him, their Head, they stand or fall,  
 Their Life, their Surety, and their All.”

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1935

### **Divine Guidance.**

“Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths” (Prov. 3:5, 6). Note well the *order* here: the promise at the close of the passage is conditional upon our meeting three requirements. First, we are to have full confidence in the Lord. The Hebrew verb for “trust” here literally means “to lean upon”: it conveys the idea of one who is conscious of feebleness turning unto and resting upon a stronger one for support. To “trust in the Lord” signifies to count upon Him in every emergency, to look to Him for the supply of every need, to say with the Psalmist “The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa. 23:1). It means that we cast all our cares upon Him, drawing from Him strength day by day and hour by hour and thus proving the sufficiency of His grace. It means for the Christian *to continue* as he began: when we first cast ourselves upon Him as lost sinners, we abandoned all our own doings and relied upon His abounding mercy. Rely now on His wisdom, power and grace.

But what is meant by “trust in the LORD *with all thine heart*”? First, the giving unto God of our undivided confidence, not looking to any other for help and relief. Second, turning to Him with childlike simplicity. When a little one trusts there is no reasoning, but a simple taking of the parent’s words at their face value, being fully assured that his father will make good what he has said; he dwells not on the difficulties which may be in the way, but expects a fulfillment of what is promised. So it should be with us and our heavenly Father’s words. Third, it means with our *affections* going out to Him: love “believeth all things, hopeth all things” (1 Cor. 13:7). Thus, to trust in the Lord, “with all our heart” is *love’s reliance* in believing

dependence and expectation.

The second requirement is, “and lean not unto thine own understanding,” which means we are not to trust in our own wisdom or rely upon the dictates of human reason. The highest act of human reason is to disown its sufficiency and bow before the wisdom of God. To lean unto our own understanding is to rest upon a broken reed, for it has been deranged by sin; yet many find it harder to repudiate their own wisdom than they do to abandon their own righteousness. Many of God’s ways are “past finding out,” and to seek to solve the mysteries of Providence is the finite attempting to comprehend the Infinite, which is not only being guilty of presumptuous sin, but is acting against our own well being. Philosophizing about our lot, reasoning about our circumstances, is fatal to rest of soul and peace of heart.

Third, “in all thy ways acknowledge Him.” This means, first, we must ask God’s *permission* for all that we do, and not act without His leave; only then do we conduct ourselves as dutiful children and respectful servants. It means, second, that we seek God’s *guidance* in every undertaking, acknowledging our ignorance and owning our complete dependence upon Him. “In *every thing* by prayer and supplication” (Phil. 4:6): only so is God’s lordship over us owned in a practical way. It means, third, seeking God’s *glory* in all our ways: “whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Ah, if we only *did so*, how very different many of our “ways” would be! If we more frequently paused and inquired, Will *this* be for God’s glory? we should be withheld from much sinning and from much folly, with all its painful consequences. It means, fourth, seeking God’s *blessing* upon everything. Here is another simple and sufficient rule: anything on which I cannot ask *God’s blessing* is WRONG.

“And He shall direct thy paths”: meet the three conditions mentioned above and here is the sure consequence. The need for being directed by God is real and pressing. Left to ourselves we are no better off than a rudderless ship or a motor-car without a steeringwheel. It is not without reason that the Lord’s people are so often termed “sheep,” for no other creature is so apt to stray or has such a propensity to wander. The Hebrew word for “direct” means “to make straight.” We are living in a world where everything is crooked: sin has thrown everything out of joint, and in consequence, confusion, worse, confoundedness, abounds all around us. A deceitful heart, a wicked world, and a subtle Devil, are ever seeking to lead us astray and compass our destruction. How necessary it is, then, for God to “direct our paths.”

What is meant by “He shall direct thy paths”? It means, He will make clear to me *the course of duty*. Let this be firmly grasped: God’s “will” always lies in the path of duty, and never runs counter thereto. Much needless uncertainty and perplexity would be spared if only this principle were steadily recognised. When you feel a strong desire or “prompting” to shirk a plain duty, you may be assured it is a temptation from Satan, and not the “leading” of the Holy Spirit. For example, it is contrary to God’s revealed will for a woman to be constantly attending meetings to the neglect of her children and home. It is shirking his responsibility for the husband to go off alone in the evenings, even in religious luxuriation, and leave his tired wife to wash the dishes and put the children to bed. It is a sin for a Christian employee to read the Scripture or “speak to people about their souls” during office or business hours.

The difficulty arises when it appears that we have to choose between two or more duties, or when some

important change has to be made in our circumstances. There are many people who think they want to be *guided by God* when some crisis arrives or some important decision has to be made; but few of them are prepared *to meet the requirements* as intimated in our opening paragraphs. The fact is that GOD was rarely in their thoughts before the emergency arose: pleasing *Him* exercised them not while things were going smoothly for them. But when difficulty and trouble confronts them, when they are at their own wits end *how* to act, they suddenly become very pious, turn to the Lord, earnestly ask Him to direct them, and make *His* way plain before their face.

But God cannot be imposed upon in such a manner. Usually such people make a rash decision and bring themselves into still greater difficulties, and then they attempt to console themselves with “Well, I *sought* God’s guidance.” Ah, my reader, God is not to be mocked like that: if we ignore His claims upon us when the sailing is pleasant, we cannot count upon Him delivering us when the storm comes. The One we have to do with is *holy* and He will not set a premium upon Godlessness (called by many, “carelessness”), even though we howl like beasts when in anguish (Hosea 7:14). On the other hand, if we diligently seek grace to walk with God day by day, regulating our ways by His commandments, then we *may* rightfully count upon His aid in every emergency that arises.

But how is the conscientious Christian to act when some emergency confronts him? Suppose he stands at the parting of the ways: two paths, two alternatives, are before him, and he knows not which to choose: *what* must he do? First, let him heed that most necessary word, which as a rule of general application is ever binding upon us, “he that believeth *shall not make haste*” (Isa. 28:16). To act from a sudden impulse never becomes a child of God, and to rush ahead of the Lord is sure to involve us in painful consequences. “The LORD is good unto them that *wait for Him*, to the soul that seeketh Him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly wait for the salvation (deliverance) of the LORD” (Lam. 3:25, 26). To act in haste generally means that afterward we shall repent at leisure. O how much each of us needs to beg the Lord to daily lay His cooling and quietening hand upon our feverish flesh!

Second, seek unto the Lord for Him to *empty your heart* of every wish of your own. It is impossible for us to sincerely pray “*Thy* will be done,” until our *own* will has, by the power of the Holy Spirit, been brought into complete subjection to God. Just so long as there is secret (but real) *preference* in my heart, my judgment will be biased. While my heart is really set upon the attainment of a certain object, then I am only mocking God when I ask Him to make His way plain before my face; and I am sure to *misinterpret* all His providences, twisting them to fit my own desire. If an obstacle be in my path, I shall then regard it as a “testing of faith”; if a barrier be removed, I at once jump to the conclusion that God is “undertaking” for me, when instead He may be *testing*, on the eve of giving me up to my own “heart’s lusts” (Psa. 81:12).

This is a point of supreme importance for those who desire their steps to be truly “ordered of the Lord.” We cannot discern *His* best for us while the heart has its own preference. Thus it is imperative that we ask God to *empty* our hearts of all personal preferences, to *remove* any secret and set desire of our own. But often it is far from easy to take *this* attitude before God, the more so if we are not in the habit of seeking grace to mortify the flesh. By nature each of us wants his own way, and chafes against every curb placed upon him. But just as a photographic plate must be a *blank* if it is to receive the impression of a picture

upon it, so our hearts must be freed from their personal bias if God is to work in us “both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13).

If you find that as you continue waiting upon God the inward struggle between the “flesh” and the “Spirit” continues, and you have *not* reached the point where you can honestly say, “Have *Thine* own way, Lord,” then a season of *fasting* is in order. In Ezra 8:21 we read, “Then I proclaimed a fast there, at the river of Ahava, that we might afflict ourselves before our God, *to seek of Him a right way for us*, and for our little ones.” This is written for our instruction, and even a glance at it suffices to show it is pertinent to our present inquiry. Nor is fasting a religious exercise peculiar to Old Testament times, for in Acts 13:3 we are told that before Barnabas and Saul were sent forth on their missionary journey by the church at Antioch, “When they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away.” There is nothing meritorious in fasting, but it expresses humility of soul and earnestness of heart.

The next thing is to humbly and sincerely acknowledge to God our ignorance, requesting Him not to leave us to ourselves. Tell Him frankly that you are perplexed and know not what to do, and that you deserve to be left in this woeful plight. But plead before Him His own promise, and beg Him for Christ’s sake to now make it good to you: “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering” (James 1:5, 6). Ask Him to grant the wisdom so much needed, that you may judge rightly, that you may discern clearly what will promote your *spiritual* welfare, and therefore be most for His glory.

“Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in Him; and He shall bring it to pass” (Psa. 37:5). In the interval of waiting, confer not with flesh and blood: if you go to fellow-Christians for advice, most probably no two of them will agree, and their discordant counsel will only confuse you. Instead of looking to man for help “Continue in prayer, and *watch* in the same with thanksgiving” (Col. 4:2). Be on the look-out for God’s answer: mark attentively each movement of His providence, for as a straw in the air indicates which way the wind is blowing so the hand of God may often be discerned by a spiritual eye in what are trifling incidents to others. “And let it be, when thou hearest the sound of a going in the tops of the mulberry trees, that *then thou shalt bestir thyself*: for then shall the LORD go out before thee” (2 Sam. 5:24).

Finally, remember that we need not only *light* from the Lord to discover unto us our duty in particular cases, but, that being obtained, we also need His *presence* to accompany us, so that we may be enabled to rightly follow the path in which He bids us go.

Moses realised this when he said to the Lord “If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exo. 33:15). If we have not the presence of God with us in an undertaking—that is, His approval upon it, His assistance in it, and His blessing upon it—then we shall find it a snare if not a curse to us.

As a general rule it is better for us to trouble our minds very little about “guidance”—*that* is God’s work: our business is to walk in obedience to Him day by day. As we do so, there is wrought within us a prudence which will preserve us from all serious mistakes. “I understand more than the ancients, *because I keep Thy precepts*” (Psa. 119:100). The man who keeps God’s precepts becomes endowed with a wisdom

which far surpasses that possessed by the sages of antiquity or the learning of philosophers. “Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness” (Psa. 112:4). The upright man may experience his days of darkness, but when the hour of emergency arrives light shall be given him by God. Serve God with all your might today, and you may calmly and safely leave the future with Him. A duteous conformity to what is right shall be followed by a luminous discernment of what would be wrong.

Seek earnestly to get the fear of God fixed in your heart so that you tremble at His Word (Isa. 66:2) and are really afraid of displeasing Him. “What man is he that feareth the LORD? *him shall He teach* in the way that he shall choose” (Psa. 25:12). “Behold, the fear of the Lord, *that* is wisdom; and to depart from evil is understanding” (Job 28:28). “Then shall we know, *if* we follow on to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3). The more we grow in grace the fuller will be our knowledge of God’s revealed will. The more we cultivate the practice of seeking to please God in all things, the more light shall we have for our path. “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8): if our motive be right, our vision will be clear.

“The integrity of the upright shall *guide* them: but the perverseness of transgressors shall destroy them” (Prov. 11:3). The upright man will not willingly and knowingly go aside into crooked paths: the honest heart is not bewildered by domineering lusts nor blinded by corrupt motives: having a tender conscience he possesses keen spiritual discernment; but the crooked policy of the wicked involves them in increasing trouble and ends in their eternal ruin. “The righteousness of the perfect (sincere) shall *direct* his way: but the wicked shall fall by his own wickedness” (Prov. 11:5): an eye single to God’s glory delivers from those snares in which the ungodly are taken. “Evil men understand not judgment: but they that seek the LORD understand all things” (Prov. 28:5). Unbridled passions and unmortified lusts becloud the understanding and pervert the judgment till men call good “evil” and evil “good” (Isa. 5:20); but he who seeks to be subject to the Lord shall be given discretion.

“The LORD shall direct thy paths.” First, by His *Word*: not in some magical way so as to encourage laziness, nor like consulting a cookery-book full of recipes for all occasions, but by warning us of the by-ways of sin and folly and by making known the paths of righteousness and blessing. Second, by His *Spirit*: giving us strength to obey the precepts of God, causing us to wait patiently on the Lord for directions, enabling us to apply the rules of Holy Writ to the varied duties of our lives, bringing to our remembrance a word in due season. Third, by His *providences*: causing friends to fail us so that we are delivered from leaning upon the arm of flesh, thwarting our carnal plans so that we are preserved from shipwreck, shutting doors which it would not be good for us to enter, and opening doors before us which none can shut.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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January, 1935

### Vainglory

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3).

Vainglory is specially a sin of “spiritual” people. True, we see in the fops (dudes) of the world a glory which is empty and vain. We see people placing an utterly foolish value on their birth, education, reputation, and place in society. But this is to be expected of people who reject Christ's view of things. It is sad enough, in all conscience, to see men and women who were made for the glory of God, consenting to be devotees of a glory that is hollow, empty and shallow. But what shall we say when we find people who call themselves after the name of the rejected and despised Man of Sorrows, secretly glorying in the vanities of life?

This vainglory is a very subtle thing. How frequently do we glide into a subdued and hidden sense of superiority over others, because grace has reached us! Have you never heard a preacher speaking to sinners as from a superior pedestal, his very tones showing that he thinks himself superior to his audience? Now, is the matter righted by his saying, as he often does, that he does not want to give the impression that he thinks himself to be on a higher and worthier plane than his listeners. The very words echo back on him with a hollow and empty sound—he shows so palpably that he feels his superiority, in spite of his disclaimer. What a vainglory it is for a man who has been lost in sin to think well of himself because Another pitied him in his way and stooped to bless and deliver him! There is great danger in “giving

testimony” in a meeting, of secretly doing so with vainglory. Some people even magnify their past sinfulness in order to attract the attention to their changed life. I remember a man doing this and adding, with complaisance, “I’m a miracle of grace!” Personally, I thought he was a miracle of vainglory.

The Holy Spirit does not usually work alongside of the man who draws attention to himself. If you want people to get their eyes fixed on you—your superior sanctity, your wit, your ready speech, your eloquence, your dramatic power, or your logic, then do not expect the Holy Spirit to help you in this business. He is bent on bringing glory to CHRIST, *and not to the preacher*. It is a very low thing to glory in your natural gifts. “What hast thou that thou didst not *receive*?” (1 Cor. 4:7). What gift of yours did you create? And if every power you possess is the result of the beneficence of another, why should you glory as if you deserved the praise? Of course, if you really did create your own beauty, intellect, powers of speech, then you ought to be praised and glorying in yourself is not vain. But did you create these capacities? All you had to do with these things was to cultivate them, and God will never deny any true worth that is due to your credit in this direction.

But strange to say, there are more subtle regions of vainglory than those already mentioned. Reference need not to be made to those who can only rejoice in the advance of their own church or branch of work, and who feel jealous when others are used of God. Such vainglory is beneath contempt. But amongst those who seek to walk before God without rebuke, there may creep in a spirit of vainglory. A little holy inner circle becomes consciously, or more often unconsciously, formed. Others are supposed not to be saved so “high up”; they are not “so fully Spirit-filled”; or perhaps they are not so utterly self-less.

Now, nothing would so shock these people as to be told they had become formed into a little inner circle, and virtually said to other estimable Christians who were living up to their light: “Stand thou on that side, for I am holier than thou.” They would be shocked if you were to tell them that their actions plainly denote that the spirit of vainglory is lurking like a canker beneath the surface of their lives—yes, deeper than their consciousness possibly.

I have seen this spirit creep into the lives of those who have been walking very near to God; and in one way or another God has dealt with it. When He could, apparently, take no softer way, He has allowed some development of spiritual life in another circle—bringing in a new line of things. Those who had gradually come to regard themselves as *the* people, now saw their deficiency. It was a very humbling revelation. And now, in turn, those who had been used to break up the little inner circle which had become self-righteous, become themselves a little proud, and a spirit of “spiritual” superiority begins to possess them. And so it goes on.

My brethren, these things ought not so to be. Can we not all take a low place before God, for “If a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he *deceiveth himself*” (Gal. 6:3). Let nothing be done through vainglory. Not one of us has anything to boast of. And let us remember that nothing—I say it thoughtfully—nothing is *so hateful to God* as the spirit that says of another: “Stand by thyself, for I am holier than thou.” Those who say this by their actions and spirit of isolation and superiority, are a smoke in the nostrils of our Lord. The moment we say, “God, I thank Thee, I am not as other men,” we become Pharisees; our true place is to say, “God be merciful to me, the sinner.”—Dudley Kidd.

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January, 1935

### **Desires Unrealized.**

by John Newton

“Ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). This is an humbling, but a just account of a Chrisitan's attainments in the present life, and is equally applicable to the strongest and to the weakest. The weakest need not say less, the strongest will hardly venture to say more. The Lord has given His people a desire and will aiming at great things: without this they would be unworthy the name of Christians; but they cannot do as they would. Their best desires are weak and ineffectual, not absolutely so (for He who works in them to will, enables then *in a measure to do* likewise), but in comparison with the mark at which they aim. So that while they have great cause to be thankful for the desire He has given them, and for the degree in which it is answered, they have equal reason to be ashamed and abased under a sense of their continual defects, and the evil mixtures which taint and debase their best endeavours. It would be easy to make out a long list of particulars which a believer would do if he could, but in which, from first to last, he finds a mortifying inability. Permit me to mention a few, which I need not transcribe from books, for they are always present to my mind.

He would willingly enjoy God in prayer. He knows that prayer is his duty; but, in his judgment, he considers it likewise as his greatest honour and privilege. In this light he can recommend it to others, and can tell them of the wonderful condescension of the great God, who humbles Himself to behold the things that are in Heaven, that He should stoop so much lower, to afford His gracious ear to the supplications of sinful worms upon earth. He can bid them expect a pleasure in waiting upon the Lord, different in kind,

and greater in degree, than all that the world can afford. By prayer, he can say, You have liberty to cast all your cares upon Him that careth for you. By one hour's intimate access to the Throne of Grace, where the Lord causes His glory to pass before the soul that seeks Him, you may acquire more true spiritual knowledge and comfort than by a day or week's converse with the best of men, or the most studious perusal of many folios: and in this light he would consider it and improve it for himself. But, alas! how seldom can he do as he would. How often does he find this privilege a mere task, which he would be glad of a just excuse to omit! And the chief pleasure he derives from the performance is to think that his task is finished: he has been drawing near to God with his lips, while his heart was far from Him. Surely this is not doing as he would, when (to borrow the expression of an old woman here) he is dragged before God like a slave, and comes away like a thief.

The like may be said of reading the Scriptures. He believes them to be the Word of God; he admires the wisdom and grace of the doctrines, the beauty of the precepts, the richness and suitableness of the promises; and therefore, with David, he accounts it preferable to thousands of gold and silver, and sweeter than honey or the honeycomb. Yet while he thus thinks of it, and desires that it may dwell in him richly, and be his meditation night and day, he cannot do as he would. It will require some resolution to persist in reading a portion of it every day; and even then his heart is often less engaged than when reading a pamphlet. Here again his privilege frequently dwindles into a task. His appetite is vitiated, so that he has but little relish for the food of his soul.

He would willingly have abiding, admiring thoughts of the Person and love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Glad is he, indeed, of those occasions which recall the Saviour to his mind; and with this view notwithstanding all discouragements, he perseveres in attempting to pray and read, and waits upon ordinances. Yet he cannot do as he would. Whatever claims he may have to the exercise of gratitude and sensibility towards his fellow creatures, he must confess himself mournfully ungrateful and insensible towards his best Friend and Benefactor. Ah! what trifles are capable of shutting out of our thoughts, of whom we say, He is the Beloved of our souls, who loved us, and gave Himself for us, and whom we have deliberately chosen as our chief good and portion. What can make us amends for the loss we suffer here? Yet surely if we could we would set Him always before us; His love should be the delightful theme of our hearts. "From morn to noon, from noon to dewy eve." But though we aim at this good, evil is present with us; we find we are renewed but in part, and have still cause to plead the Lord's promise, to take away the heart of stone, and give us a heart of flesh.

He would willingly acquiesce in all the dispensations of Divine providence. He believes that all events are under the direction of infinite wisdom and goodness, and shall surely issue in the glory of God and the good of those who fear Him. He doubts not but the hairs of his head are all numbered;—that the blessings of every kind which he possesses were bestowed upon him, and are preserved to him by the bounty and special favour of the Lord whom he serves; that afflictions spring not out of the ground, but are fruits and tokens of Divine love, no less than his comforts;—that there is a needs-be, whenever for a season he is in heaviness. Of these principles he can no more doubt of what he sees with his eyes, and there are seasons when he thinks they will prove sufficient to reconcile him to the sharpest trials. But often when he aims to apply them in an hour of present distress, he cannot do what he would. He feels a law in his members warring against the law in his mind; so that, in defiance of the clearest convictions, seeing as though he

perceived not, he is ready to complain, mummer, and despond. Alas! How vain is man in his best estate! How much weakness and inconsistency, even in those whose hearts are right with the Lord! And what reason have we to confess that we are unworthy, unprofitable servants!

It were easy to enlarge in this way, would paper and time permit. But, blessed be God we are not under the law, but under grace: and even these distressing effects of the remnants of indwelling sin are overruled for good. By these experiences the believer is weaned from self, and taught more highly to prize and more absolutely to rely on Him, who is appointed unto us of God, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. The more vile we are in our own eyes, the more precious He will be to us, and a deep repeated sense of the evil of our hearts is necessary to preclude all boasting, and to make us willing to give the whole glory of our salvation where it is due. Again, a sense of these evils will, when hardly any thing else can do it, reconcile us to the thoughts of death, yea make us desirous to depart that we may sin no more, since we find depravity so deep rooted in our nature, that, like the leprous house, the whole fabric must be taken down before we can be freed from its defilement. Then, and not till then, we shall be able to do the thing that we would: when we see Jesus we shall be transformed into His image, and have done with sin and sorrow forever. (1772).

N.B. It is not to be understood from the above article that the experience of the Christian is one of constant or total defeat. On the other hand, no Christian enjoys a course of uninterrupted victory. Nor does the above article portray the experience of a backslider, for when a Christian lapses into a backslidden state, his desires and efforts are far below the level of what was here described by Mr. Newton. Just as in the natural world all days are not bright and fair, so it is in our present spiritual life; there is light and shade, brightness and gloom, ups and downs, songs and groans, praisings and confessions. No Christian perfectly realizes his own aspirations. The “perfect day” has not yet dawned.—A.W.P.

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February, 1935

**Union and Communion.**  
*Introduction (Completed).*

Union and communion with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit who dwells personally in the saints, is a most glorious and transcendent wonder of Divine grace. Nature cannot comprehend it; carnal reason cannot grasp it; none can have the least real perception of its nature, importance, or excellency, but such as are born from above; nor can the regenerate either, except as they are Divinely enlightened and supernaturally lifted up into the true knowledge and enjoyment of the same. Spiritual life, and all its activities, is beyond the ken of mere intellect, consisting as it does in communion with God Himself. The oneness of the Church with Christ is a blessed reality, which none but the Spirit of God can open to the renewed mind and give right views of it. It is His royal prerogative so to do: it is part of His official work according to the eternal settlements of grace: His work is to glorify Christ, to enthrone Him in the hearts of His blood-bought people.

Were it not that the Holy Spirit “searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God” (1 Cor. 2:10), and that we had the unfailing promise of Christ (which needs to be laid hold of by faith and pleaded before God) that this infallible Teacher “will guide you into all truth” (John 16:13), it would be the very height of presumption for us to attempt to write upon such a subject. The very profundity of our present theme has been clearly intimated by God's designating it a “mystery.” It is remarkable that twice only in the sacred Scriptures do we read of a “*great* mystery”: once when the reference is to that ineffable union of the human nature with the Godhead in the Person of Immanuel—”great is the mystery of godliness” (1 Tim.

3:16); and once when mention is made of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His Church—”This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (Eph. 5:32).

To aid our finite understandings, a variety of figures and natural analogies are used to express the oneness of Christ and His people. The marriage of Adam and Eve in their unfallen state, by which they became “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31) is a striking resemblance of the union between Christ and His Church, for He is the Husband (Isa. 54:5), she is the Spouse (Song. 2:1): as Adam said of Eve “this is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh” (Gen. 2:23), so the saints are assured “we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:30). Another resemblance or type is that of the head and members of our physical organism. In the human body there is such an intimate relation and vital connection between the head and its members that if severed the one could have no living existence apart from the other. Thus it is in the Body mystical: Christ is the Head, believers are the members: see 1 Corinthians 12:12, 27; Ephesians 4:15, 16.

A third resemblance is that of the root and the branches: there is a union between them, otherwise how should the one convey juice and nourishment to the others. So it is with Christ and believers: “I am the Vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). The same figure is found again in a number of passages in the Epistles: there we read of being “*grafted in* among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:17); of being “*rooted and built up in Him*” (Col. 2:7). This is a blessed analogy between Christ and believers and the root and the branches, in point of union and in point of influence: the root conveys life and nourishment to the branches; so does Christ to those who are one with Him. With this resemblance we may link the simile used by our Lord: “the corn of wheat” (John 12:24) falling into the ground, with its embryo increase of “much fruit” wrapped up within itself.

Still another resemblance is the foundation and the building which is found again and again in Scripture. Here too there is a *union*, for in a building all the stones and timbers being joined and fastened together upon the foundation, make but one entire structure. So it is here. The saints are “God's building” (1 Cor. 3:9), Christ Himself being the “Foundation” of that building (v. 11). And again, we are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). The building itself is the complement of the foundation, but remove it, and the whole superstructure topples to the ground. How blessed to be assured by God, “Behold, I lay in Zion a *sure* foundation” (Isa. 28:16). Finally, Christians are referred to as “lively (living) stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:5), which tells us that our union with Christ is both a mystical and a vital one.

In addition to the various figures and resemblances which God has graciously designed to employ so as to aid our feeble minds in grasping something of the mysterious and glorious union which exists between His Son and His people, there are also types in the Old Testament which throw light thereon. A notable one is found in Exodus 28: “And thou shalt make holy garments for Aaron thy brother for glory and for beauty . . . And thou shalt take two onyx stones, and grave on them the names of the children of Israel . . . And thou shalt put the two stones upon the shoulders of the ephod for stones of memorial unto the children of Israel: and *Aaron* shall bear *their* names before the LORD upon his two shoulders for a memorial . . . And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And thou shalt put it on a blue lace, that it may be upon the mitre; upon the forefront of the mitre it

shall be. And it shall be upon Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things, which the children of Israel shall hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall be always upon *his* forehead, that *they* may be accepted before the LORD” (vv. 2, 9, 12, 36-38). Thus was the whole Israel of God represented before Jehovah *in* the person of Aaron—blessed adumbration of the identification with our great High Priest. “It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments” (Psa. 133:2)—figure of the Holy Spirit communicated to Christ *and* His people.

*Communion* with Christ is our participation with Him in the *benefits* flowing from His several offices. As in marriage there must be a union before there can be any communion (sharing together) of estates and conditions, so before we can obtain anything *from* Christ we must first be one *with* Him: all is *in* Christ for us. “He that hath the Son hath life” (1 John 5:12), and the term “life” sums up all spiritual blessings, just as physical “death” cuts off from all temporal mercies. We “have” the Son by God's eternal gift to us, as He possesses us by the Father's eternal gift of us to Him. Therefore it is written, “For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is *given*” (Isa. 9:6)—as in marriage: God made a grant of His Son to us, and *that* included all: “He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him *also* freely give us all things?” (Rom. 8:32).

“For we are made *partakers* of Christ” (Heb. 3:14): He and we are made one, “*joint* heirs” (Rom. 8:17). “Being united *to* Christ, we are possessed of all *in* Christ, so far as is consistent with our capacities of receiving and God's ordination and appointment in giving. Union gives us interest in the personal merits and righteousness of Christ and the benefits of His mediatory actions; they are ours to all effects and purposes, as if we ourselves had satisfied and obeyed the law. Why? because it is not in a person sundered from us; it is in our Head, in One to whom we are united by a strait bond of union (better “by a legal and vital bond of union”), therefore are they reputed as one.” (T. Manton, 1670).

“But of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). To be “in Christ” is to be *united* to Him: first electively (Eph. 1:4), when God chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. Second, representatively (1 Cor. 15:22), as we were in Adam. Third, vitally (2 Cor. 5:17), as a branch in the vine. Fourth, voluntarily (Rom. 8:1), by faith cleaving unto Him. Of this compound union we are taught two things here in 1 Corinthians 1:30: its origin and its effects. As to its origin, it is “of God,” He alone being the efficient cause. As to its effects, because the saints are one with Christ, they *participate* in His benefits, and so He is “made unto us wisdom” etc.

Because of our union with Christ we are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:6). We have the same title to enter God's presence that Christ has: “*by His own blood* He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12), “having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest *by the blood of Jesus*” (Heb. 10:19)! Because of our union with Christ we have not only a valid title or right to draw nigh unto God, but a personal *fitness*: “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath *made us meet* to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). Our very life is “hid *with Christ* in God” (Col. 3:3), so that before we can perish, He must perish. What is yet more blessed, the Father loves us as He loves Christ: “That the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou

hast loved Me” (John 17:23).

“Christ is His Father's Son, and believers are Christ's sons: (Isa. 8:18). He is the Father's delight (Isa. 42:1), they are Christ's: Psalm 16:3. He is the Father's glory (Heb. 1:3), and they are Christ's: 2 Corinthians 8:23. God is Christ's Head (1 Cor. 11:3), Christ is their Head: 1 Corinthians 11:3. God always hears Christ (John 11:42), and Christ them: John 15. All power is given to Christ (Matt. 28:18), and by Christ to them: Philippians 4:13. God has committed all judgment to Christ (John 5:22), Christ makes them His assessors: 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3” (D. Clarkson, 1685).

The oneness of Christ and His people is manifested in intimate and precious fellowship together. The whole of Solomon's “Song” sets forth this union and communion in a most wonderful and blessed way. Observe by what endearing terms the Saviour calls His Church: “Thou hast ravished My heart, my Sister, my Spouse” (4:9)—she is His “sister” as well as His “spouse,” for by taking her into union with Himself, this brings the Church into *every* relation: the saints are His “sons” (Heb. 2:10), His “brethren” (Heb. 2:12), and compare Matthew 12:48. The Divine Bridegroom says to His wife, “*eat*, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved” (5:1); and she says, “Let my beloved come into His garden, and *eat* His pleasant fruits” (4:16): there is sweet entertainment on both sides. They are mutually charmed with each other's beauty: He says, “Behold, thou art fair, My love” (4:1); she exclaims, “my Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (5:10).

The precious intimacy of that union which exists between Christ and His people is manifested in many Scriptures. “If any man hear My voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, *and he with Me*” (Rev. 3:20): there is *mutual* communion, reciprocal affections. Christ and His saints are fond of hearing each other's voices: “let Me see thy countenance, let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice, and thy countenance is comely” (Song. 2:14). That is Christ speaking to His spouse; her response is, “the companions hearken to Thy voice: cause me to hear it” (8:13). There are also mutual complaints between them: “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love” (Rev. 2:4); “LORD, why castest Thou off my soul? why hidest Thou Thy face from me?” (Psa. 88:14). O that both writer and reader may be favoured with more intimate and constant communion with the eternal Lover of our souls: “Casting all your care upon Him; for He careth for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

Let us now seek to define and describe a little more closely the *nature* of that union which exists between Christ and His Church.

1. It is *supernatural*, being altogether beyond the powers of the creature to effectuate. It is wholly of the wisdom, grace, and power of God. All the unions we have in the natural world come infinitely short of this. The union of the body and soul in man puzzles and baffles the greatest philosophers, but the union of Christ and His Church is a far greater mystery: that persons so distant, so divided, should be made one, is a profundity which no finite intelligence can fully comprehend. We had known nothing whatever about it if God had not revealed it to us in His Word, and even now we discern it “through a glass darkly.”

2. It is a *real* union, not a mere theoretical or fantastic thing, a creature of the imagination. Though it cannot be perceived by our senses, nor visualized by the mind, it is not a mere theological fiction. It is

plainly and expressly affirmed in many Scriptures, under a great variety of expressions, all of which are too clear to be misunderstood. As actually as the limbs of the body are united to their head, the wife to the husband, the branches to the root, so truly are the saints united to Christ and Christ to them. Take this away and the whole of Christianity collapses. Is not the union between God the Father and God the Son a *real* one? then so is this: John 17:22: the one is as much a verity as the other.

3. It is *spiritual*. The great design and the grand aim of God in His purpose and dealings with the elect is the communication to them of the benefits of Christ; but all communication of benefits implies communion, and all communion necessarily presupposes *union* with His Person. Not that there is any confusion or transfusing of the Christian's person with Christ's Person, but a real and personal conjunction between them. That conjunction is not a gross, fleshly, corporeal union, but a mystical, spiritual, and inward one. The nature of this union is seen in the *bond* of it: it is entirely spiritual—the Spirit in Christ, faith in us. The husband and the wife are “one flesh” (Eph. 5:31), but “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17).

4. It is *intimate*, far closer than that existing between the branches and root of a tree, or that between husband and wife. The union between Christ and His people is so near that we know not how to conceive it, still less express it. We may borrow some light here and there from the different unions in nature, but they all, in point of nearness, fall far short of it. Believers are so united to the Lord as to be “one spirit”—what an expression is that! what could be spoken higher! so intimate is this oneness that in a coming day Christ will say, “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these My brethren, ye have done it unto *Me*” (Matt. 25:40). So near are the saints to Christ, they are a part of Him, so that He would be *incomplete* without them—they are His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23).

5. It is *indissoluble*. The oneness between Christ and His Church is such that it cannot be broken. All the powers of Satan cannot destroy that union. “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8:35). “Ye *shall* abide in Him” (1 John 2:27). It is an inseparable, insuperable union. Death itself, though it break all other unions, does not and cannot put an end to or reach this. “Blessed are the dead which die *in* the Lord” (Rev. 14:13); “absent from the body, and to be present *with* the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8)! And this union pertains to *all* the redeemed: the least as well as the greatest Christian, the humblest as well as the highest, is *equally* united to Christ and participates in what belongs to Him.

Union with Christ *in glory* is the goal toward which we are now moving, but at present we enjoy *experimental* union with Him in grace. But experimental union with Christ is only possible as there is a *practical* union with Him, *for* “can two walk together except they be agreed?” Practical union with Christ presupposes a *saving* one, whereby the heart is wedded to Christ in faith and love. That, in turn, necessitates a *vital* union, for only as quickened by the Spirit and made one with Christ can any sinner savingly believe unto Him. And that again denotes a *mystical* and eternal union, for the Spirit quickens none save those who had a covenant-oneness with Christ before the foundation of the world. Nor could there ever have been *any* union between the Creator and the creature but for the *mediatorial* union, whereby the Son united our nature to His own ineffable Person. And the foundation of *that* was the *Divine* union, the three Persons in one God. The Lord willing, by His enabling, we shall seek to contemplate separately each of these unions in the articles which follow, taking them up in their inverse

order.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

February, 1935

### **Following the Cloud.**

“Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price” (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). This is true of every Christian: he is no longer at his own dispose, but entirely subject to the will of his Redeemer. Doubly does this principle apply to His public servants: they are not free to lean unto their own understandings, follow their own preferences, please their relatives or fellow-Christians; instead, they must take orders only from their Master. Even though comfortably and congenially settled, even though the blessing of the Lord be resting upon their present labours, when the Cloud of Providence moves, they are required to pull up the stakes of their tents, and follow it unhesitatingly and uncomplainingly. It is not for us to reason why; it is for us to promptly comply.

“And when the cloud was taken up from over the tabernacle, the children of Israel went onward in all their journeys: but if the cloud were not taken up, then they journeyed not till the day that it was taken up” (Exo. 40:36, 37). The sacred Cloud which supplied special and supernatural guidance to the children of Israel in their wilderness wanderings, while possessing a deeper typical significance than we can here enter upon, was also a blessed figure of the providential and gracious direction which God affords His people now. Though not so evident and palpable as the Cloud, yet unto those whose eyes are humbly and trustfully turned unto Himself, the Lord gives today just as real and definite a guidance under all their varied and perplexing circumstances.

Those who are acquainted with the details of Israel's wilderness journeyings have seen that God called

upon them to be *frequently on the move*—prefiguring the fact that in this world His saints have “no *continuing city*” (Heb. 13:14). Not for long were they suffered to remain in any one place. No sooner were they comfortably placed than the Lord stirred up their nest. True, God does not treat with all of His people in the same way, yet throughout the centuries many of them have been forcibly struck with the close analogy between their own experiences and those of Israel in the wilderness of old. Particularly has this been the case with God's official servants: the more we study the lives of the Prophets, the Saviour, and the Apostles, the more shall we find that they were constantly on the move.

Thus it has been with the writer and his wife during the past twenty years. Many times has the Lord required us to leave one happy camping-ground for another. Just when we thought we were permanently located, the clear call has come for us to journey to other parts. Verily God's thoughts and ways are often the very opposite of ours. The flesh desires a smooth and straight path, with lengthy periods of relaxation; but again and again the word is given “Arise ye, and depart; for this is not your rest” (Micah 2:10). The disposing of furniture, the packing of our large library, the moving from one country to another, is a considerable undertaking, and to continue issuing the magazine without any break under such conditions is a task for which only Divine wisdom and strength is sufficient. But God has never failed us, and we have abundant cause to praise Him for all the way in which He has led us.

The Lord made it very plain that the work for which He took us to the U.S.A. was completed, and that He would have the editor return to the land of his birth. From the human side of things, it seemed a foolish move to make, for nearly all our Christian friends are in America; whereas in England we are now almost unknown. Nor was there any natural inducement, for during our absence from Great Britain our beloved parents have been called Home, and we have no relatives at all who know Christ. Moreover, religious conditions in England today are very far from being promising; in fact true spirituality is probably at a lower ebb now than for over a century past. Yet these very circumstances have only provided a background for *faith*: because of them we are, by grace, the more cast back upon our never-failing God. O that we may now be enabled to trust in Him with all our hearts.

We have much cause for thanksgiving. Full journeying mercies were granted: a smooth voyage across the ocean, and all our baggage intact on reaching our destination. Cordial welcome was given us by our kind and loyal friends the Winstones. For the present we are located in Cheltenham: how long the Lord will keep us here, we know not. Our daily prayer is that the Lord of the harvest will graciously open doors where we may minister His Word orally. There are few places where we would feel free to enter, for we dare not, even by our presence, sanction much which is now going on under the cloak of Christ's holy name. Yet it seems almost impossible to get a hearing on the outside. We have hired a room where we teach each Wednesday evening, but only a handful have assembled thus far.

The prayers of God's children are earnestly solicited. Our main work, by God's enabling, will still be the continued publication of this little monthly messenger, which reaches many of the scattered children of God who we never expect to meet down here. Nevertheless, it is our fervent longing that we may have opportunity to preach and teach by lip as well as by pen. We are neither discouraged nor cast down; far from it. Rather are we increasingly hopeful that a real and widespread Revival is not far distant: O that it may please the God of all grace to grant us some part in the same. His ear is still open unto the cries of the

righteous; and humble, and earnest, importunate supplication and intercession will again open the windows of Heaven, as it so often has in the past.

Surely there are still left somewhere in these British Isles congregations or groups which would welcome an oral ministry along the lines of our articles; places where “*all* the counsel of God” would be welcomed. Pray that the Lord will bring us into touch with such, give us favour in their eyes, and use us to bring them into a closer walking with Himself and into the fullness of His rich blessing. As of old, it is largely true today that God's people “are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6)—lack of faithful Gospel preaching, lack of sound doctrinal instruction, lack of practical teaching as to how they may enter into God's best for them in this life. The need is indeed great, the situation is urgent—a challenge to faith, to prayer, to believing effort.

Through thirteen years the Lord has graciously sustained us in the publication of this little magazine. Though no subscription charge is made for it, and though no one has been asked for a penny, yet during the worldwide financial depression, God has moved His stewards to send in gifts to defray its expenses, so that we have been enabled to pay every bill promptly and to obey that command “Owe no man any thing” (Rom. 13:8). We are greatly encouraged by the constant receipt of letters telling of how God has been pleased to bless different articles to the hearts and lives of one and another of His dear people. We greatly long for our coast to be enlarged, that we may have the holy privilege of feeding many more of Christ's hungry sheep. Our circulation increased substantially last year, and we are praying for a still larger addition this year. The Lord bless us, and make us a blessing.

Will new readers kindly bear with the familiar references to the editor and his wife in the above paragraphs. Many of our older readers are close personal friends which the Lord gave us in the various places at which we stopped in our journeyings. They desire to be kept informed of our movements and of God's providential dealings with us, and though we have an instinctive dislike of saying anything about ourselves, yet from time to time we yield to the loving desires of our well-wishers. Having no “office help” and composing so many articles each month, it is impracticable to write a lengthy private letter to each one of those with whom we have been closely associated in the past; so occasionally we employ these columns to supply a few news items about ourselves. One day the full record will be read out of that “Book of Remembrance” which is being kept on High: then we shall be gathered together around the Lamb, never more to leave His presence or be separated from each other. In the meantime let us seek to bear each other up in the arms of faith before the Throne of Grace. We are thankful to say that all is well with us.—A.W. and V.E. Pink.

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February, 1935

### **Anxiety.**

“In nothing be anxious” (Phil. 4:6. R.V.) Worrying is as definitely forbidden as theft. This needs to be carefully pondered and definitely realized by us, so that we do not excuse it as an innocent “infirmity.” The more we are convicted of the sinfulness of anxiety, the sooner are we likely to perceive that it is most dishonouring to God, and “strive against” (Heb. 12:4) it. But *how* are we to “strive against” it? First, by begging the Holy Spirit to grant us a deeper conviction of its enormity. Second, by making it a subject of special earnest prayer, that we may be delivered from this evil. Third, by watching its beginnings, and as soon as we are conscious of harassment of mind, as soon as we detect the unbelieving thought, lift up our heart to God and ask Him for deliverance from it.

The best antidote for anxiety is frequent meditation upon God's goodness, power and sufficiency. When the saint can confidently realize “The Lord is my Shepherd,” he must draw the conclusion, “I shall not want!” Immediately following our exhortation is, “but in *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.” Nothing is too big and nothing is too little to spread before and cast upon the Lord. The “with thanksgiving” is most important, yet it is the point at which we most fail. It means that *before* we receive God's answer, we thank Him for the same: it is the confidence of the child expecting his Father to be gracious.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1935

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *1. Divine Union.*

That which we shall seek to contemplate in this article is the revelation which God has made of Himself in His inspired Word. This ineffable subject is one which we must ever approach with bowed heads and reverent hearts, for the ground which we are to tread is indeed holy. The subject is transcendently sacred, for it is concerned with the infinite and majestic Jehovah. It is one of surpassing importance, for it is the foundation of all spiritual knowledge and faith. For any real light thereon, we are entirely shut up to what God has made known of Himself in His Word. Neither observation, science or philosophy can, in this exalted sphere, advance our knowledge one iota. We can know no more thereon except what is set forth in Holy Writ, and that must be approached with the deepest humility and reverence, with the earnest prayer, “that which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32).

It is not sufficient to think of God as He may be conceived of in our imagination, instead, our thoughts of Him must be formed by what He has revealed of Himself in His Word. Man, unaided, cannot rightly conceive of God: all speculation concerning Him is utterly vain, yea, profane. The finite cannot comprehend the Infinite. If the “judgments” of God are “unsearchable” and if His “ways” are “past finding out,” how much more so must God Himself be! Even creation cannot fully teach us what God is, because no work is able to perfectly express the worker thereof. The heathen have creation spread before them, but what do they know of *God*! The ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Greeks, sought to delve deeply into the marvels and mysteries of “Nature,” but with all their boasted wisdom the Deity was to them “the unknown

God”!

It is of vast importance to the souls of God's believing people that they should have clear, spiritual, and Divine knowledge of the true and living God: without a scriptural acquaintance of the same, we are left without the very supports which are indispensable to found our faith upon. It is impossible to over-emphasise the momentousness of our present theme, for the truth thereon will alone direct us in worshipping God aright. If a person has erroneous thoughts of Deity, then he worships a false god and renders homage to a fictitious being, the figment of his own imagination. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3): that is unspeakably blessed; it is likewise unspeakably solemn—the man who knows not the “only true God” is destitute of eternal life!

Now as we turn to and examine the Holy Scriptures we are at once impressed with their repeated and uniform emphasis upon the *unity* of God. In contrast from the polytheism (many gods) of the heathen, we read, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is *one* LORD” (Deut. 6:4), and, as we have seen above, “this is life eternal, that they might know Thee the *only* true God.” There can be but one infinite, self-existent Spirit, who reveals Himself as the great “I am,” from whom, and through whom, and to whom, are all things, to whom be glory for ever. To think of two, or more, independent and supreme Beings, would be to suppose a contradiction in terms, an utter impossibility. There can be but one *God*, with sovereign authority over all the works and creatures of His hands, having but one plan and a single administration. Such is indeed the teaching of Scripture from Genesis to Revelation.

But as we continue our examination of what God has revealed of Himself in His Holy Word, it is not long before we reach that which is profoundly mysterious, for side by side with its continuous emphasis on the *unity* of God it also reveals *three* distinct Divine Persons, namely, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Here we come to an infinite depth which we have no means of sounding, for while the Scriptures are unmistakably clear in their presentation of three Divine Persons, nevertheless they are equally express in denying that there are three Gods. Though no attempt whatever is made in Scripture to explain this mystery, it is unmistakable in affirming it: in affirming that God is an absolute Unity in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; and all who refuse to bow to and acknowledge this ineffable truth must be eternally damned.

The incomprehensible nature of the truth which is now before us, so far from providing a valid motive for its rejection, supplies a most powerful argument for its being formally received. For if this truth be so sublime and mysterious, that even when revealed, it infinitely surpasses the feeble grasp of our finite powers, then it is very evident that it could never have been invented by men! What human wisdom cannot comprehend, human policy could never have proposed. It *must* have had some higher projector, and therefore the conclusion is unavoidable: in God alone we behold an adequate cause. “This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa. 28:29).

The first great truth, then, which is presented to faith—the foundation of everything—is the fact of the one living, eternal, and true God; and this we know not by any discovery of reason, but because He has Himself revealed it to our hearts through His Word. The next great truth is that the one living and true God

has revealed Himself to us under the threefold relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; and this we know upon the same authority as the first. Both of these sublime truths are above reason yet their very transcendency so far from stumbling us, is a necessary condition of our confidence in the Scriptures and our faith in Him who is there revealed. Had the Scriptures professed to present a revelation of God which had no heights beyond our powers to scale, and no depth too deep for mental acumen to fathom, the writer for one would promptly spurn them as the invention of man. Personally, I would no more worship a God that my intellect could measure, than I would an idol which my hands had manufactured.

“Jesus called a little child unto Him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and *become as little children*, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 18:2, 3). A hard lesson for proud man to learn is that, yet it *must be* learned (by grace) if any entrance is to be had into the things of God. It is at *this* point we may perceive one of the radical differences between the regenerate and unregenerate: *faith receives* what reason is unable to grasp. “Great God, I desire to fall down under the deepest self-abasement, in the consciousness of my own nothingness and ignorance before Thee! I bless the Lord for that degree of information He hath been pleased to give of Himself, while here below. It is enough! O for grace, 'to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge' Colossians 2:2, 3” (Rob. Hawker, 1810)—such is the language of every renewed heart.

Though the doctrine or truth of the Divine Trinity is properly speaking a “mystery,” that affords no ground whatever for it to be disparaged by us. Some people seem to suppose that by the term “mystery,” reference is made to something of which they can at best form only a vague notion, that it pertains to the sphere of half-perceived shadows, in relation to which certainty is impossible, and that it has no *practical* connection with the solid elements of knowledge and real life. This is a great mistake. The word “mystery” in Scripture is applied to that which cannot be discovered by human reason, or arrived at by any speculation, but which can only be made known by *Divine revelation*, and which can only be perceived so far as God has been pleased to unveil it. Just so far as spiritual “mysteries” *have been* disclosed by God, they become part of the real and solid knowledge of those by whom that revelation is humbly received.

It is in the Gospel that the three Persons in the Godhead are most clearly revealed, and Their respective activities in the saving of the elect are most fully made known. “The Gospel represents *God the Father* as sovereign Lord of heaven and earth: as righteous Governor of the world: as giving laws to His creatures; as revealing His wrath against all transgressions. He is represented as being injured and offended by our sins, and concerned to maintain the honour of His majesty, of His Law and government, and sacred authority. He is represented as having designs of mercy towards a sinful, guilty, ruined world; and as contriving and proposing a method of recovery. He is represented as one seated on a throne of grace, reconciling the world unto Himself by Christ, ordering pardon and peace to be proclaimed to any and all who will return to Him in the way prescribed.

“The Gospel represents *God the Son* as being constituted Mediator by His Father, that in and by Him He might open a way to accomplish His designs of mercy towards a guilty world, consistent with the honour of His majesty, of His holiness and justice, of His Law and government. His Father appointed Him to the office, and He freely undertook it. His Father sent Him into this world to enter upon the difficult work, and

He willingly came: 'He was made flesh, and dwelt among us.' Here He lived, and here He died, in the capacity of a Mediator. He arose, He ascended into Heaven, and sits now at His Father's right hand, God-man Mediator, exalted to the highest honour; made Lord of all things, and Judge of the world. And now we are to have access to God by Him, as our Mediator, High Priest, Intercessor, and Advocate, who has made complete atonement for sins in the days of His abasement, and has now sufficient interest in the court of Heaven.

“The Gospel represents *God the Holy Spirit* as being sent of the Father as prime Agent, and by the Son as Mediator, in the character of an enlightener and sanctifier, in order to bring sinners effectually to see and be made sensible of their sin, guilt, and ruin; to believe the Gospel, to trust in Christ, and to return home to God through Him. It is His office to dwell in believers; to teach and lead them; to sanctify, strengthen, comfort, and keep them through faith unto salvation.

“The Father is God by nature, and God by office. The Son is God by nature, and Mediator by office. The Spirit is God by nature, and Sanctifier by office. The Father as Governor, Law-Giver, and Avenger, has all power in Heaven and earth, in and of Himself: Matthew 11:25. The Son as Mediator derives all His authority from the Father: Matthew 11:27. The Holy Spirit acts as being sent by them Both: John 14:16. The Father maintains the honour of the Godhead and of His government, displaying His grace while ordaining that sin should be punished, the sinner humbled, and brought back to God and into subjection into His will. Sin is punished in the Son as Mediator, standing in the room of the guilty. The sinner is humbled and brought into subjection to God's will by the Holy Spirit. Thus the Son and the Spirit honour the Father as supreme Governor, and all join in the same design to discountenance sin, humble the sinner, and glorify grace” (Joseph Bellamy, 1780).

By affirming that the three Divine Persons are more clearly revealed in the Gospel than elsewhere, it is *not* to be understood that the Old Testament saints were left in ignorance of this blessed and foundation truth. That could not be, or otherwise it had been impossible for them to know God, or to worship Him intelligently and acceptably. God must be *revealed* before He can (in any measure) be known, and He must be *known* in the distinctions of His Persons, before He can be loved and adored. Those who find it hard to conceive of the Old Testament saints possessing a clear evangelical knowledge of the mystery of the Trinity, create their own difficulty by supposing the Gospel is peculiar to the New Testament dispensation. This is a serious mistake. Hebrews 4:2 declares, “For unto us was the Gospel preached, as well as unto *them*”—that is, unto Israel in the wilderness: see the closing verses of Hebrews 3. To go back further still, Galatians 3:8 tells us, that God, “preached before *the Gospel* unto Abraham.”

The glorious truth of the three Persons in the Godhead is to be found as definitely and as frequently in the Old Testament as it is in the New. On the very first page of Holy Writ it is recorded, “And God said, Let *US* make man in *OUR* image, after *OUR* likeness” (Gen. 1:26): how clearly do the plural pronouns there reveal the fact that there is *more* than one Person in the Godhead! Nor is Genesis 1:26 by any means the only passage in the Old Testament where the plural pronoun is used of God. After Adam had fallen, we find Him saying, “Behold, the man is become as one of *Us*, to know good and evil” (Gen. 3:22)—probably that was the language of irony: God's answer to the Serpent's lie in 3:5. Again, in response to the impiety of those who had said, “Go to, let us build us a city and a tower, whose top may reach unto heaven” (Gen

11:4), the Lord said, “Go to, let *Us* go down, and there confound their language” (Gen. 11:7).

Once more, in that marvelous vision granted unto Isaiah, wherein he saw the Lord “seated upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple,” before whom the seraphim veiled their faces, the Prophet “heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall *I* send, and who will go for *Us*?” (Isa. 6:8). Very wonderful is that “I” and “Us,” intimating the Divine unity in Trinity, and the trinity in Unity. It is striking to note that the employment of this plural pronoun in connection with the Godhead, as it is consecrated by the Spirit of truth in use with the Persons in the Divine Essence, is employed by *Each* of Them to each other. By the Father in Genesis 1:26—cf. Ephesians 3:9, the Father being the *Creator* “by Jesus Christ”; by the Son in Genesis 11:7, for to Him all *judgment* is committed (John 5:22); by the Spirit in Isaiah 6:8, see Acts 28:26 and cf. 13:2!

The Hebrew *noun* is in the plural number in each of these verses: “Remember now thy *Creators* in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1); “For thy *Makers* are thine Husband” (Isa. 54:5); “Let the children of Zion be joyful in their *Kings*” (Psa. 149:2); “The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the *Holy Ones* is understanding” (Prov. 9:10)—according to the rule of Hebrew parallelism, it is obvious that “Holy Ones” is exegetical of “Jehovah.” Surely there is more than a hint of the Divine Trinity in the benediction of Numbers 6:24-26, “*The LORD* bless thee, and keep thee: *the LORD* make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: *the LORD* lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace.” Also in the “Holy, holy, holy” of the seraphim in Isaiah 6:3. In Isaiah 48:16 we hear the Messiah saying, “Come ye near unto Me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the (1) Lord GOD, and (2) His Spirit, hath sent (3) Me.” “So *the Spirit* took me up, and brought me into the inner court; and, behold, the glory of *the LORD* filled the house. And I heard *Him* speaking unto me out of the house; and *the Man* stood by me” (Ezek. 43:5, 6). While the Prophet was adoring the manifest glory of God, the Spirit conducted him into the inner chamber, while beside him stood the One who had been instructing him—“The Man”: see 40:3. Thus the Prophet had a vision of the three Persons in the Godhead, manifesting in different ways Their presence with him.

A plurality of Persons in the Godhead was also indicated in such passages as, “Then *the LORD* rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire *from the LORD* out of heaven” (Gen. 19:24); “The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at My right hand” (Psa. 110:1); “And *the LORD* said unto Satan, *The LORD* rebuke thee” (Zech. 3:2). “Be strong, all ye people of the land, saith the LORD, and work: for I am with you, saith *the LORD* of hosts: *the Word* that I covenanted with you when ye came out of Egypt, so *My Spirit* remaineth among you” (Hag. 2:4, 5). The first Person in the sacred Trinity was known to the Old Testament saints as *the Father*: from a number of passages we select the following, “But now, O LORD, Thou art our Father” (Isa. 64:8). The second Person in the Trinity was revealed as *the Son*: “The LORD hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son” (Psa. 2:7), and also as *the Word*: “By *The Word of the LORD* were the heavens made” (Psa. 33:6) and cf. Genesis 15:1 and 1 Kings 19:9 where the essential and personal “Word” is in view. The third Person in the Trinity was revealed as *The Holy Spirit*: “The Spirit of the LORD” (1 Sam. 16:13).

“Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob. Let them bring them forth, and show *Us* what shall happen: let them show the former things, what they be, that *We*

may consider them, and know the latter end of them; or declare *Us* things for to come” (Isa. 41:21, 22). A truly remarkable passage is that; with it may be compared, “If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and *We* will come unto him, and make *Our* abode with him” (John 14:23). “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit” (Isa. 57:15): the “high and lofty *One*”—one in the inseparable unity of the Divine Essence; “that inhabiteth eternity”—thus distinguished from all creatures; “dwelling in the high and lofty place”—true of the Father (1 Kings 8:27), of the Son (Jer. 23:24—see v. 6), of the Spirit (Psa. 139:7, 8); *indwelling His people*—true of the Father (2 Cor. 6:16, 18), of the Son (Col. 1:27), of the Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19).

The title “Jehovah”—applied to the Father (Psa. 110:1), the Son (Jer. 23:6), and the Holy Spirit (2 Sam. 23:2)—is *always* in the *singular* number, having no plural form, being expressive of the Unity of the Divine nature. Yet we frequently find it employed with the plural “Elohim” (God), and with plural pronouns and verbs—a thing which could never have been done consistent with the laws of grammar, except for the purpose of proving thereby, what all the parts of Scripture concur in, that Jehovah though but One in the essence of the Godhead, is nevertheless existing at the same time in a plurality or trinity of Persons. That the great God should subsist in a way *entirely different* and perfectly distinguished from all His creatures in a trinity of Persons in the unity of His essence should not stagger us, but should bow our hearts before Him in adoring wonder and worship.

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). This very verse which is quoted so much by “Unitarians,” in their hatred of the blessed truth which we are here endeavouring to set forth, would be quite meaningless were there no Trinity of Persons in the Godhead. It is self-evident that there is no need whatever for any *Divine revelation* to teach us that *one is one*: had this text meant nothing more than that, it had been superfluous information. But inasmuch as “Elohim” (God) is in the plural number, it *was* necessary for the Deity to make known unto His people that the three Divine Persons are but *one* “Lord” or Jehovah. That Israel apprehended (in some measure, at any rate) this mystery of the great One in Three, is strikingly manifested by the fact that when Aaron made the single golden calf, the people addressed it in the *plural* number: “These be thy *gods*, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exo. 32:4)!!—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1935

### **Spiritual Oneness.**

“Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word; that they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (John 17:20, 21). There appears to be considerable confusion in the minds of many today as to the meaning of “that they all may be one,” so much so that some of God's dear children are in danger of espousing a view which is very dishonouring to Christ. What ever be the real and full meaning of this petition in our Lord's high priestly prayer, it certainly must not be interpreted in any such manner as to repudiate His own words to the Father in John 11:42 “And I knew that Thou hearest Me always.” Yet, those who constantly emphasise the differences which exist among God's people come perilously near to committing this very sin.

Now it is obvious at the outset that, in order to understand this petition of Christ's, attention needs to be carefully directed unto the following points: first, *for whom* was He here praying? second, what was *the precise character* of the “oneness” for which He here prayed? Once these questions are rightly answered, much uncertainty and mistaken conception will be cleared away. Nor is it at all difficult to discover the right answers to these inquiries: they call for no protracted searching, but lie right on the surface itself; and once they are pointed out, the simplest believer should have no difficulty in perceiving their correctness. It is our desire herein to call attention to what is quite plain, and very satisfying to the hearts of those who desire their thoughts to be formed by what God has revealed in His Word, rejecting those human ideas which are contrary thereto.

First, then, for whom was our Lord praying when He asked “that they all may be one?” Let us begin with the negative answer: Christ was *not* here supplicating for the union or unity of Christendom. It seems strange then there should be any need for us to make this assertion, yet for generations past not a few have deplored the divisions in “the professing Church” as being contrary to that upon which the Saviour here set His heart; and zealous efforts have been made to unify discordant elements under the idea they were promoting the accomplishment of His desire. But such “zeal” was “not according to knowledge” and therefore we need not be surprised at the absence of God's blessing upon such labours; rather should the lack of His benediction at once make us suspicious of the Scripturalness of their enterprises.

“I pray for them: *I pray not for the world*, but for them which Thou hast given Me” (John 17:9). There is no ambiguity about these words, no excuse for not understanding their purport: they plainly enough define the objects Christ had before Him when interceding with the Father. Neither the profane world, nor the professing world, came within the scope of His high priestly requests: as He declared by the Spirit of prophecy centuries beforehand, “Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, *nor take up their names into My lips*” (Psa. 16:4). Solemn indeed is this: Christendom, as such, never has been the object of Christ's intercession: His petitions are limited unto those which the Father “gave Him” before the foundation of the world. So it was in the type: on the breastplate of Aaron were inscribed not the names of the nations of Canaan, but only the twelve tribes of Israel.

It should be clear, then, from what has been pointed out above, that the divisions of Christendom, the conflicting systems and parties which claim to be Christian, in no wise clashes with this request of the Redeemer's “that they all may be one,” nor is the present “strife of tongues” in the religious realm any proof that His prayer yet remains unanswered. Far from it, for the simple but sufficient reason that *it was not for the oneness of Christendom* that the Lord Jesus here prayed. We say again, that once this simple and introvertible fact be grasped much uncertainty and error disappears like the morning mists before the rising sun. If the divisions of Christendom were a hundred times more marked and bitter than they are now, that would in no wise conflict with Christ's petition; and if all those breaches were closed and the whole of Christendom united in belief and practice, that would not to the slightest degree evidence the fulfillment thereof.

Secondly, exactly *what was* the “oneness” for which Christ here prayed? Again we will begin with the negative: certainly not for any external or organized oneness. Christ was not here supplicating for any visible or ecclesiastical union or unity, such as many have supposed is the great desideratum. It is to be deplored that there should be any need for us to assert this, yet, for many years past there have been those who decried the sectarian differences in Christendom as being opposed to what Christ so much desired; and various devices have been resorted to for breaking down the separating walls in the belief that this would secure the answer to the Saviour's prayer. But this is as far from the truth as is the idea that the Lord was here praying for Christendom as a whole.

“That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us” (John 17:21). There is nothing dark or uncertain in this language; it clearly signifies the nature of that

“oneness” for which Christ is interceding. It was a spiritual and Divine oneness, such as existed between Himself and the Father; a mystical and invisible union. This is brought out with equal explicitness in an earlier verse of the same chapter: “Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, *as we are*” (John 17:1). Thus, that union and communion among the elect for which Christ prayed, had for its pattern or similitude, the union and communion which existed between the Mediator and the Father, and that is neither a material nor external one.

“That the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me” (v. 21). It is failure to understand this last clause which has led many to an erroneous interpretation of the whole verse. It has been supposed that the divided state of Christendom is the principal hindrance in the way of the world's acceptance of the Gospel, and that if only the spirit of sectarianism could be banished from the earth, unbelief would be at an end. Such day-dreamers seem to have forgotten that at the beginning of this dispensation there *was* a manifested unity among all those who bore the name of Christ: “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common” (Acts 4:32)—yet that was very far from effecting any change in the world's attitude toward God and His Christ.

Let it be carefully noted Christ did not say “that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe *in Me*,” but “that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me.” And *when* will “the world,” (i.e., that “world” for which He prays not in verse 9) believe that Christ is the One sent by the Father? when will the ungodly be convicted of the verity of His claims? The only possible answer is In the last great day, when before an assembled universe Christ shall present His people “faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy” (Jude 24). Then will the enemies of the Lord have such outward proof of the union and communion subsisting between Himself and the Church as no longer to disbelieve the truth of it: only they will not believe and be saved, but instead believe and be damned.

That union and unity between His people for which the great High Priest prayed was not a visible one, but an invisible; not a material, but a spiritual one. It is a union in grace now, and a union in glory hereafter. It was not the unity of churches, but the unity of *the Church* for which our Lord supplicated the Father. Nor has His prayer remained unanswered all these nineteen centuries. No, indeed. All His blood-bought people *are* welded together in a way and to a degree which no other company is or can be; as it is written “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are *all one* in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:28)—note not “shall be,” but “*are all one* in Christ Jesus.”

Nor is the union of the redeemed *only* a mystical one during this present era: even now there is a oneness among all the truly regenerate on everything that is vital and fundamental. All real Christians believe firmly in the Divine inspiration and authority of Scriptures, in the unity and trinity of the Godhead, in the Deity and sinless humanity of Christ, in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice as the alone ground of their acceptance with God, in His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, the prevalency of His intercession, of His returning in glory and final judgment of the wicked. Yes, on “the foundations” of the faith, *all* God's people take their firm stand, and for this He should be fervently praised. Instead of dwelling so much upon minor things—concerning which God's children, most probably, never will all see eye to eye down here—we should be occupied with the major things which we all enjoy in common.

What so many have clamoured for is neither union nor unity, but uniformity—absolute likeness in belief and practice. But such a desire ignores one of the principle characteristics in all God's works, instead of uniformity, there is endless variety in all creatures of His hands. There are no two minds alike, no two faces, no two voices; nay, no two blades of grass. True, there are many species having one common genus; many different sounds or notes which combine in harmony; behind incidental variations there is an underlying unity. So it is in the spiritual realm. The eleven Galileans were equally the Apostles of the Lamb and were loved alike by Him; they all followed, trusted in, and loved the same Lord and Saviour, yet each had a distinct individuality, and no two of them were alike in all things.

Whatever blame may or may not rest upon men for the existence of the various evangelical denominations in Christendom, let not the superintending hand of God therein be lost sight of. In our readiness to criticise former leaders—which charity requires us to believe were at least equally devoted to the Lord and as anxious to conform to His Word as we are—we need to be much on our guard lest we be found quarreling with Divine providence. While it be true that a measure of failure marks whatever God entrusted to men, yet let it not be forgotten that “*Of Him and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen*” (Rom. 11:36). We are either very ignorant of history or superficial readers thereof, if we fail to perceive the guiding hand of God and His “manifold wisdom” in the appointing and blessing of the leading evangelical denominations.

“There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification” (1 Cor. 14:10). Yes, and while those different voices may not all sound the same note, yet if they be pitched to the same key, they harmonize. The present writer is not prepared to hold a brief in defence of every peccadillo in any denomination, system or company of professing Christians; on the other hand, he desires to freely recognize and gladly own whatever is of God in all of them. Though himself unattached ecclesiastically, and a partisan of no single group, he wishes to have Christian fellowship with any and all who love the Lord and whose daily walk evidences a sincere desire to please Him. We have lived long enough and traveled sufficiently to discover that no one “church,” company, or man, has all the truth, and as we grow older we have less patience with those who demand that others must adopt *their* interpretation of Scripture on all points.

There should be a happy medium between sectarian narrowness and the world's “broadmindedness,” between deliberately compromising the Truth and turning away from some of the Lord's people because they differ from us on non-essentials. Shall I refuse to partake of a meal because some of the dishes are not cooked as I like them? Then why decline fellowship with a brother in the Lord because he is unable to pronounce correctly my favourite shibboleth? It is not without reason that “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” is immediately preceded by “forbearing one another in love” (Eph. 4:2, 3). Probably there is as much if not more in me that my brother has to “bear” with, as there is in him which grates upon me. As good old Matthew Henry said, “The consideration of being agreed in greater things should extinguish all feuds over lesser ones.”

In conclusion, let us anticipate an objection. “Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment” (1 Cor. 1:10). More has been built upon this

verse than it will legitimately sustain. The next two verses show plainly the scope of this exhortation: it was a word against party strifes which alienated brethren belonging to the same local church. To be “perfectly joined together” in this verse signifies a union in faith and love, and nothing further than a *general* and fundamental oneness of judgment can fairly be gathered from it. Where there is, by grace, an agreement in all vital things, there should be a charitable bearing with differences of lesser importance. The Lord mercifully preserve both writer and reader from aiding Satan and doing his work by fomenting division. “Hast *thou* faith? *have it to thyself before God*. Happy is he that condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth” (Rom. 14:22).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1935

### **Union and Communion.**

#### 1. *Divine Union (Completed).*

Right views of the Divine Being and Character lie at the foundation of all genuine and vital godliness. It should, then, be our supreme quest to seek after the knowledge of God. Without the true knowledge of Him, in His nature, Persons, attributes, we can neither worship Him acceptably nor serve Him aright. The *unity* of the Godhead is an essential part of His character. The God whom the Scriptures command us to adore and serve, love and obey, is the one only living and true God. There cannot be but *one* First Cause of all things, absolutely, independent, necessarily existent, and infinite in all perfections. But this one God subsists in a *threefold*, though to us incomprehensible, manner. Though He is one simple, undivided essence, yet in the mode of His existence He subsists in three Persons. Incomprehensible as this is, yet it is no more so than as *uncaused* and eternal existence: God is infinitely above all creatures, and exists in a manner peculiar to Himself.

This truth of three Persons in the Godhead is basic, being essential to the very scheme of Salvation itself, and it has been accounted the catholic doctrine of the whole Christian Church in all ages. In Scripture, the work of our salvation is represented as engaging the *joint-agency* of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. God *the Father* it was who, in infinite wisdom planned the amazing scheme, providing Himself a Lamb to purge away sin. God *the Son*, in His own Person, executed the plan, by submitting to be “delivered for our offences and raised again for our justification.” God *the Spirit* secures an effectual reception of this scheme of salvation, sanctifying the souls of the elect unto eternal happiness, in which it

finally issues.

Each of these sacred Persons, who thus co-operate in our salvation, must of necessity be really and truly *God*, for none less could possibly execute any part of that grand scheme. Who, but the supreme Lord Himself, could admit an innocent Substitute to become Surety for criminals and bear their curse! What being *beneath* the dignity of Deity could possibly offer a satisfaction of infinite sufficiency to the Divine government, possessing such merits that, by obeying and suffering the penalty of the law, full atonement should be made for all innumerable offences committed against the Majesty of Heaven by the entire election of grace! And unto whom beside God Himself, the eternal and blessed Holy Spirit, doth such power belong as to change the darkness of human depravity into ineffable light, subdue rebellious wills, and bring them into loving obedience unto the Lord!

All that pertains to salvation is the gift of the Father, through the incarnate Son, by the Holy Spirit: and it is inexpressibly blessed to find in so many Scriptures how *all* the Persons in the Godhead are individually as well as unitedly concerned in the grand matter of the Church's redemption. This ought ever to be viewed as the standard of orthodoxy. Whatever is presented from pulpit or press which does not give *equal* place and ascribe equal honour to *each* of the Eternal Three is the doctrine of demons. There is not a vestige of real "Christianity" where this foundation truth of the Trinity is not known, acknowledged, and magnified. Nor is there a vestige of true piety in any heart where the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not dwell. Furthermore, it is not possible to obtain a clear and full view of any doctrine of the Word, unless the telescope of this transcendent truth be applied to the eye of faith and be viewed through it.

Now if the Holy Scriptures be so plain and full in declaring in the interposition and operations of each Person in the blessed Trinity in the work of our salvation, it must of necessity be the bounden duty as well as the precious privilege of each Christian to pay a becoming attention to and endeavour by devout meditation and prayerful searching of the Word, to get impressed on his mind and heart what God has revealed on the subject. It most certainly behooves each one of us to spare no pains in endeavouring to attain unto a full spiritual knowledge of how the Divine Three stand related to us, how They are severally interested in us, and what we are to expect from Them. This will lead us to render unto Each Divine Person that honour and praise, that loving obedience, which is His distinctive due. For "this is life eternal, that they might *know Thee* the only true God" (John 17:3).

"The knowledge of God here spoken of, must include in it such a knowledge of the Holy Trinity as is revealed in the blessed gospel. The divine persons in their essential and distinctive relation to each other, and to us, must be so far known as to be believed, and acknowledged by us. The truth of their existence (not the knowledge of their subsisting in the infinite essence), is most essential to the being and to the well-being of our faith. As also how they are related unto us, and have acted for us in the everlasting covenant, in and by which they are and have revealed themselves to be the Lord our God. To know the Father, to be our Father in Christ Jesus, that He hath loved with an everlasting love, is life eternal. To know the Son, as one with the Father, of the same essence with the Father, and that He was set up to be God-man, from everlasting, this is life eternal. To know the Holy Spirit, to be personally distinct from the Father and the Son, yet of the same essence, glory, perfections and blessedness with the Father and the Son, is life eternal" (S.E. Pierce).

A distinction in the Divine nature inconceivable by us, but plainly revealed in Holy Writ, must be acknowledged by us on the all-sufficient testimony of Him who alone can instruct us in what we are concerned to know of His ineffable essence and being. “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit: and these three *are one*” (1 John 5:7). To each of these three Persons the perfections of Deity are attributed and ascribed in hundreds of passages of Scripture. Each of Them, therefore, is *God*, and yet it is equally clear that there is but *one* Jehovah. Nor is there the slightest ground for us to demur in the face of this insuperable and insoluble mystery. “Let us first if we can, account for the nature, essence, and properties of the things with which, as to their effects, we are familiarly acquainted. Let us *explain* the growth of a blade of grass, or the virtues of the lodestone. Till we are able to do *this*, it becomes us to lay our hands upon our mouths, and our mouths in the dust” (John Newton).

A plurality of Persons does *not* mean that the Godhead is divided, so that the Father is *one part of* deity, the Son another part, and the Spirit still a third part. “The Divine *nature* IS the Godhead, simply and absolutely considered; a *person* is that which subsisteth IN the Godhead, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (W. Perkins, 1595). It is the Divine Persons in the union of the Divine Essence which are to be distinguished, and not the Essence itself. Jehovah is to be worshipped as a Unity in Trinity, and a Trinity in Unity: one God is to be acknowledged in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When Scripture is compared with Scripture it is plain to be seen that the Divine Unity is *not* a unity of Persons, but of nature and essence. Though there are three in the Godhead, who are dignified with the incommunicable name of Jehovah, possessing *the same* attributes and perfections and entitled to the same adoration, yet Holy Writ does not exhibit a plurality of Deities.

That each of the Eternal Three partakes of the one Divine Essence is proved by Their names. Each is called “God”: the Father in Hebrews 1:1, the Son in Hebrews 1:8, the Spirit in Acts 5:4—see verse 3. Each of them is designated “Jehovah”: the Father is Psalm 110:1, the Son in Psalm 23:1, the Holy Spirit in Isaiah 11:2. Each of them is denominated “The Living God”: the Father in Matthew 16:16, the Son in Hebrews 3:12 and 1 Timothy 4:10, the Spirit in 2 Corinthians 6:16—cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16. Each of them is addressed as “The Almighty”: the Father in 2 Corinthians 6:18, the Son in Revelation 16:7, the Spirit in Job 32:8. Each of them is set forth as a “Fountain”: the Father in Jeremiah 2:13, the Son in Zechariah 13:1, the Spirit in John 7:38. In Ephesians 1:17 the first Person is termed “the Father of Glory”; in James 2:1 the second Person is termed “the Lord of Glory,” while in 1 Peter 4:14 the third Person is termed “the Spirit of Glory.”

That these three names—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—are *not* so many diverse titles for one and the same august Person, but instead, belong to three distinct but equally Divine Persons, is clear from the fact that in Scripture they are frequently represented as *speaking to one another*. Thus, in the 2nd Psalm the Messiah declares, “The LORD hath said *unto* (not “of”) Me, Thou art my Son . . . *Ask of Me*, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance” (vv. 7, 8). In the 40th Psalm the Son is heard speaking *to* the Father, saying “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O my God: yea, Thy law is within My heart” (vv. 7, 8). In the 45th Psalm the Father says to His Son, “Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre” (v. 6). And again in the 110th Psalm, “The LORD *said unto* my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” (v.

## 1). What could possibly set forth more clearly the distinction of Persons in the Godhead!

In the previous section of this article we called attention to a number of passages in the Old Testament where the Eternal Three are all mentioned together: the same blessed phenomenon is presented again and again in the New Testament. “When the (1) Comforter is come, whom (2) I will send unto you from (3) the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of Me” (John 15:26). “I beseech you, brethren, for (1) the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for (2) the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers (3) to God” (Rom. 15:30). “For through Him (Christ) we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). “To the acknowledgment of the mystery of God (the Spirit), and of the Father, and of Christ” (Col. 2:2). “The Lord (the Spirit) direct your hearts into the love of God (the Father), and into the patient waiting for Christ” (2 Thess. 3:5). “Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God” (Heb. 9:14). “Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:2).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19). In the name of the Triune God believers are to be baptized. What a conclusive confirmation of the blessed doctrine of the Holy Trinity is this! Here are three Divine Persons, but with *one* “Name”—note carefully it is not “names!” The absolute Deity of the Son and of the Spirit are here unmistakably intimated by their conjunction with the Father, since baptism is administered *equally* in the name of all Three as a religious ordinance, yea, as a part of Divine worship, which could never be were either of the Three merely a creature. Not only is there a profession of faith in the three Divine Persons made by those who are scripturally baptized, but there is a solemn dedication unto Their service and worship, being laid under obligation of obedience unto Each.

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God (the Father), and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). This passage contains another clear proof of a trinity of Persons in the Godhead, for here distinct things are ascribed and of Them asked, as *equal Objects* of prayer and worship. That comprehensive benediction includes all the prime blessings and benefits of redemption: the “grace” of our adorable Saviour, the “love” of our heavenly Father, and the “communion” of our Divine Comforter. Unto what wretched shifts are the enemies of the Truth put, who would reduce the meaning of this verse unto “the grace of a *creature* and the love of the *Creator* be joined with the communion of *an energy* of Deity, be with you all!” Unspeakably solemn is 1 John 2:23, “Whosoever denieth the Son, the same hath not the Father”: a denial of the Trinity is a repudiation of the Deity of the Son and the Spirit, and he who is guilty of that most awful sin knows not, hath not “the Father!” In denying *one* they equally deny *all*.

“And Jesus, when He was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon Him: and lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:16, 17). Let it be carefully observed here were presented all three Persons of the Godhead, clearly distinguished from each other and manifested severally, and that, in such a way and manner as is needed to define the Persons of Each. Here was the Person of the Father, manifested by a voice from Heaven. Here was the Person of the

Son, manifested in our nature, coming up from the water. Here was the Person of the Holy Spirit manifested in the form of a dove, lighting upon the Son. What could more clearly distinguish the Eternal Three—the Father speaking, the Son spoken of, and the Spirit manifested apart from Both! Forever be His name praised that the Triune God there so gloriously revealed Himself.

Not only are the Eternal Three in one God plainly revealed in Scripture in their distinctive personalities, but Their *absolute equality* One with the Other is also clearly made known. It would extend this article unto too great a length were we to present a small part of the proof that each One is possessed of the same Divine perfections, and quote some of the texts which affirm that Father, Son and Spirit are alike eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent. Instead, we will here simply point out how Their equality is evidenced by the *order* in which They are mentioned in various Scriptures. In Matthew 28:19 it is God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. In 2 Corinthians 13:14 it is the Son, the Father, and the Spirit. In Ephesians 4:4 it is the Spirit, the Son, and the Father. In Colossians 2:2 it is the Spirit, the Father, and the Son. In Revelation 1:4, 5 it is the Father, the Spirit, and the Son. What could more definitely intimate Their equality than this *variation* of order!

Infidels have sought to turn into ridicule the fact of Christ praying to the Father, arguing that if both were Divine and there be only one God, then God was praying to Himself. In this they betray their ignorance, failing to discern the distinctions in the Godhead: though the Divine Essence be one, there is a distinction of Persons in the undivided nature. “The language of *I* and *Thou*, and *Me* and *Thee*, so often used by Christ in John 17, are so many proofs of the Divine personalities of Himself and of the Father. The word personalities is expressive of the mode of existing in the Divine nature. The word person, besides that, implies the nature and substance in whom He subsists. A person is an individual that subsists and lives of itself, endowed with will and understanding, who is neither sustained by, nor is part of another. Such is the Father, therefore a Person; such is the Son, therefore a Person; such is the Holy Spirit, therefore a Person. The great and incommunicable name of Jehovah is always in the singular number, because it is expressive of His essence, which is but one; but the first name we meet with in the first verse of Scripture is plural” (S.E. Pierce).

Scripture does not present the doctrine of the sacred Trinity in any way of contradiction, and affirms that God is one and three, three and one, in the *same* manner: instead, it reveals that God is one in *nature*, but three in His *Persons*. When Christ said “I and (My) Father are one” (John 10:30), He signified one in nature, not one in Person. The word “God” is sometimes expressive of the Divine Essence, and sometimes of one of the Persons in that Essence. The three Persons are one in substance, one in the depths of a common consciousness, one in purpose, and with absolute equality in power and glory. “They agree with one another in nature, being, life, time, dignity, glory, or anything else pertaining to the Divine Essence: for in all these They are one and the same, and consequently co-essential, co-equal, co-eternal” (J. Usher, 1640).

The Divine Persons are not only one, but they are *in* one Another: “As Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee” (John 17:21)—there is an intimate inhabitation without any confusion of the three Subsistences. They enjoy perfect, absolute, and Divine union and communion with Each Other. In the Scriptures we hear Them speaking *to* Each Other, and *of* Each Other in such a way as to clearly show a distinction of Persons,

while constituting one Jehovah in the indivisible Essence of the Godhead. The ineffable union between the Eternal Three is such that Each One is *in* and *with* the Others; Each One loves, possesses, glories, in the Other, and works the same thing. “The Father loveth the Son” (John 3:35); “the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise” (John 5:19); “Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me?” (John 14:10).

“The union of the Trinity in Godhead is an essential one. There can be no greater unity. Nothing can be more one than the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are one. Yet it is a unity which consists with order and distinction: the Unity of the Trinity does not take away the distinction of the Persons, nor confuse Their order. They are one, yet three. They keep Their distinct Personalities, and Their distinct Personal operations, and Their different manner and order of acting. It is an eternal and inseparable union, for in the Divine nature or Essence there can be no change. It is from the unity of the Persons in the same Essence ariseth their essential Inbeing in Each Other. All the Persons having the same Essence and being in the one Essence, it follows that in respect of the Essence, one Person is as Another.

“The great and incomprehensible God is essentially and infinitely holy, happy, blessed, and glorious. His nature is a fountain of infinite perfection. He is life itself, eternity itself, love itself, and blessedness itself. His happiness arises from the knowledge which He hath of His own essential nature, Persons and perfections. Nothing can be added unto Him, for 'of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things' (Rom. 11:36). From the in-being, society, and mutual intercourse held between the Eternal Three in the one Jehovah, flows that life of joy and bliss which belongs to God alone. The essential union between the Persons in the Eternal Godhead is incommunicable, and the communion which They had from everlasting with Each Other is incomprehensible. Yet we may venture to say, Their communion consisteth in the eternal life of the three Persons among Themselves, in the common interests and propriety which They have in Each Other, in reciprocal affections, communion and enjoyment; in an equal knowledge of Each Other; in an alternate communication of Each Other's mind in mutual love and delight, and in Their possession of one common glory and blessedness.

“There is an incomprehensible love borne by the Three in Jehovah to Each Other: it is a part of Their essential perfection and blessedness. Whilst the Scripture is not altogether silent on this most sublime truth, yet it speaks but sparingly of it, because it exceeds all created conceptions; it can no more be comprehended than the life and self-sufficiency of Jehovah can. Yet, as in the order in which the Essential Three exist and co-exist in the incomprehensible Jehovah, They have been pleased to make known and manifest Their Personalities in all Their eternal, internal and external acts of grace in election, regeneration, sanctification, preservation and eternal glorification. So Their love to Each Other is intimated in those distinct displays of grace which are attributed to Each of Them in the sacred Word. It is expressly said, 'The Father loveth the Son' (John 3:35), 'I love the Father' (John 14:31). And from the co-equality of the Father, Son and Spirit, in the Essence or Godhead, and from the unity of the Holy Ones in the whole revelation of grace, it is evident that the Spirit loves the Father and the Son” (S.E. Pierce, 1810).

Thus we have sought to begin this series of articles with the highest and most glorious of all: the union of the Eternal Three. It is the union of distinct Persons in the unity of a single nature. It is an union which is absolute, essential, eternal, incomprehensible, ineffable. It is not only futile, but grossly impious, to

attempt any *illustration* of it, for there exists *no* analogy in all the universe. GOD is unique! But though profoundly mysterious, every truly regenerated soul has *proof of this truth* in his own inward experience. He knows that he has access through Christ, by the Spirit unto the Father. He knows that the Man who has saved him from Hell is indwelt by “all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.” He knows that the invincible power which subdued his enmity and caused him to throw down the weapons of his rebellion, was exercised by God the Spirit. And he knows that he has received the spirit of adoption whereby he cries “Abba, Father.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### Evil Speaking

“He that keepeth his mouth keepeth his life: but he that openeth wide his lips shall have destruction” (Prov. 13:3). “A guard upon the lips is a guard to the soul: he that is careful, who thinks twice before he speaks once, that, if he hath thought evil, lays his hand upon his mouth to suppress it, that keeps a strong bridle on his tongue, and a strict hand on the bridle, he keeps his soul from a great deal of guilt and grief, and saves himself the trouble of many bitter reflections on himself, and others upon him” (Matthew Henry). Alas, how many are now saying—by their very attitude and actions “our lips are our own: who is lord over us?” (Psa. 12:4).

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4:11). Is not this a word which is much needed by some of us today? Alas, in some quarters the habit of discrediting others behind their backs has become so common that it is regarded almost as a matter of course; the mentioning to others of a brother's faults or a sister's failures, the repeating of unfavourable reports which have come to our ears is so general that few appear to make any conscience thereof. Nevertheless, God still says “*Speak not evil* one of another, brethren.” Yes, this *is* an exhortation which requires to be prayerfully taken to heart by not a few. Personally, the writer has to acknowledge with shame that this Divine injunction has not had the restraining influence upon his unruly tongue which it ought, and in what follows he desires to preach unto himself as well as to others.

How solemn it is to observe that one of the sins mentioned in that awful catalogue enumerated in Romans

1:29-31 is that of detraction or injuring the reputation of others—”whisperers, backbiters”: therein does the corruption of man's vitiated nature evidence itself. To stain the good reputation of another is highly reprehensible. God commanded us to love our neighbour as ourself, and this requires that I am to be concerned not only about his person and property, but to protect his good name. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches” (Prov. 22:1), and therefore to rob a man of his good name is worse than stealing his property. A citizen of Zion is thus described: “He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour” (Psa. 15:3).

“Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4:11). That which is here forbidden is the saying of anything, be it true or false, to the prejudice of another. God requires that our words should be governed by “the law of kindness” (Prov. 31:26), and anything which would hurt or injure the reputation of another is to be rigidly eschewed. Whenever I cannot speak well of my brother or sister, I must say nothing at all. It is devilish to take delight in exposing the faults of fellow-Christians, and stirring up prejudice and bitter feelings against them (Rev. 12:10). God requires that our words should agree with love as well as with truth. Since Christians are *brethren*, the last thing they should be guilty of is defaming one another.

“Take no heed unto all words that are spoken” (Eccl. 7:21). “Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge” (Prov. 19:27). *Beware of evil listening!* Those who receive tales about others, who delight to hear of the failings of their brethren, encourage evil speakers in their sin and are partakers of their guilt. “The north wind driveth away rain: so doth an angry countenance a backbiting tongue” (Prov. 25:23). The Christian is not only bidden to abstain from all evil speaking himself, but is required to discourage this sin in others by frowning on it and endeavouring to put it out of countenance. Slanders would not be so readily spoken as they are, if they were not so readily heard. “Many abuse those spoken evil *of*, only in hopes to curry favor with those they speak *to*” (Matthew Henry). Disappoint them by showing your disapproval.

Since it be a grievous sin to speak evil of a brother in Christ, how much greater is the offence when it is committed against one of His ministering servants! True, they are not faultless, yet their blemishes are not to be blazed abroad, but should be covered with the mantle of love. “Wherefore then *were ye not afraid* to speak against my servant Moses?” (Num. 12:8): observe the emphasis—ye should be afraid to speak evil against any one, much more against My honoured servant. It is written, “Against an elder (bishop) *receive not an accusation*, but before two or three witnesses” (1 Tim. 5:19). It is at our peril that we say or do anything against the servants of God, for He reckons those who touch them as touching “the apple of *His* eye” (Zech. 2:8). “Touch not Mine anointed, and do My prophets *no* harm” (Psa. 105:15) is His express command.

To speak evil of others proceeds from ill will or malice, either desiring that they should be made odious in the esteem of others, or being quite indifferent if that effect be produced. To say that no harm is intended is to talk foolishly: “As a mad man who casteth firebrands, arrows, and death, so is the man that deceiveth his neighbour, and saith, Am not I in sport?” (Prov. 26:18, 19). Much repeating of the ill reports about others issues from an uncharitable readiness to believe the worst: “For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. Report, say they, and *we will report it*” (Jer. 20:10). But the chief cause of this evil is an unruly tongue, nor are we likely to seek grace for bridling that member until we really make conscience of

this sin.

It is both striking and searching to note how often the Holy Spirit addresses Himself to God's children on this subject. Many are the verses in the Book of Proverbs which contain salutary instruction for the right use of our tongues. So also in the New Testament exhortations are frequently given against the wrong use of our tongues. “Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, *and evil speaking*, be put away from you, with all malice” (Eph. 4:31). “Let your speech be *always* with grace, seasoned with salt” (Col. 4:6). “Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, *and all evil speakings*, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:1, 2): there must be the definite and daily “laying aside” of these bad habits if we are to preserve a healthy appetite for spiritual things. “For he that will love life, and see good days, let him *refrain his tongue from evil*, and his lips that they speak no guile” (1 Peter 3:10): here is one of the Divine rules of longevity—“evil speaking” has more ill effect upon the health than many imagine!

But is *all* speaking evil of another unlawful? No, though even here it is hard to keep clear of sinning. There are times when it is a duty to caution our friends against those who might prove a menace to them: if I know one is about to buy an article that has been misrepresented, or trust some money to a dishonest person, then I must faithfully raise my voice in warning. If I should be summoned as a witness in court, then I am bound to tell what I know. Yet, where the glory of God and the honour of His Gospel is at stake, or where there is danger of a brother being imposed upon or wronged, and my duty to speak out is plain, nevertheless, the following cautions need to be heeded. First, take pains to fully *verify* what you have heard, and make sure that what you relate is true. Second, do it in a right spirit: not censoriously, nor with delight, but with godly sorrow. Third, be impartial, and if occasion requires you to mention another's faults, be careful not to conceal his virtues.

Except where the glory of God plainly requires it and the good of our neighbour or brother demands it, we must refrain from all evil speaking of others. If we are duly occupied with and humbled over *our own* many faults, we shall have neither time nor inclination to dwell upon or publish those of others. If we properly heed the exhortation of Philippians 4:8, we shall cultivate the habit of admiring the graces in our brethren instead of like filthy flies settling on their sores. Certain it is that if we are not tender of the reputation of others, God will make us taste of the bitterness of this affliction for ourselves: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7); “with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again” (Matt. 7:2). How solemn is that word, “speaking evil of you: who shall give account to Him that is ready to judge the quick and the dead” (1 Peter 4:4, 5). Well may we pray, “Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips” (Psa. 141:3).—A.W.P

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1935

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *2. Mediatorial.*

*That which is now to engage our attention is the constitution of the Person of Christ, not as He existed from all eternity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, but as He was upon earth working out the salvation of His Church, and as He now is in Heaven at God's right hand. It was an essential part of His covenant-engagement that the beloved Son should become the Surety of His people, and in order thereto, assume their nature into union with His Divine Person, and thus become God and man in the Person of one Christ. In consequence of that union all the fulness of the Godhead dwells in Him bodily or personally, in a manner and to an extent it does not, will not, and cannot, in any other. This is the next greatest mystery which is revealed in Holy Writ, being the foundation upon which the Church is built (Matt. 16:18), and concerning which a belief thereof is absolutely essential unto salvation. It is therefore impossible to over estimate the importance, blessedness, and value of this truth.*

This Mediatorial union—denominated the “Hypostatic (personal) union” by theologians—or the conjunction of the Divine and human natures in the God-man Mediator, is based upon that infinitely higher union which we sought to contemplate in the last two articles. Divine union—between the Eternal Three—was the foundation of the Mediatorial union. Had there been only one Person in the Divine Essence or Godhead, our salvation had been utterly impossible: we could not be joined to the very nature or essence of God, without either ungodding Him or deifying us. For the elect to have been taken into immediate union with God would produce a change in the Divine nature—an addition to it—something

which can never be. Even the Man Christ Jesus could not be taken into immediate union with the Divine Essence absolutely considered, though He could and was with One in that Essence.

We are conscious of the fact that we have just stepped into deep water, and perhaps those who are accustomed to paddle in the shallows will be unwilling to follow; but for the sake of the few who desire, by grace, to believe, and as far as God now permits, to understand the *mysteries* of our faith, we deemed it expedient to touch briefly upon this profound depth—not in a spirit of unholy boldness, but in fear and trembling. As it was impossible that the Divine nature should suffer and die, so it was for us to be joined thereto. But we could become one with a Divine *Person* who Himself subsisted *in* the Divine Essence, and Omniscience found a way whereby that should be effected. By virtue of the Son's assuming our humanity the elect have been taken into union with a Divine Person, yet not into union with the Divine nature or Essence itself. Thus we have sought to point out an error against which we need to carefully guard, lest we entertain thoughts grossly dishonouring to the Godhead.

The highest union of all is that incomprehensible and yet ineffable union which exists between the three Divine Persons in the one Divine Essence. The next great union—founded, as we have briefly intimated above, upon that essential one—is the union of our nature unto the second Person in Jehovah, so that the Word made flesh is both God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. This too is a profound and unfathomable mystery, yet is it revealed as a cardinal article of our faith. It is a subject of pure revelation, and only from the sacred Scriptures can we obtain any light thereon. It falls not within our province to *explain* this mystery, yet it is our privilege and duty to spare no pains in prayerfully seeking sound and clear views of the same, for there can be no true growing in grace except as we grow in the scriptural and Spirit-imparted knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Right thoughts of Him are to be esteemed far above all silver and gold.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel say of this subject, “We walk upon the brink of danger; the least tread awry may engulf us in the bogs of error.” There are certain vital postulates which are necessary to the scriptural setting forth of “the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9), if the truth about His wondrous and glorious Person is to be maintained; such as the following. First, that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, possessing the Divine nature and all its essential attributes. Second, that He is also true Man, possessing human nature in all its essential properties and sinless infirmities. Third, that those two diverse natures are united in His unique Person, yet ever remain distinct and unmixed, so that the Divine is not humanized, nor the human deified. Fourth, that both of those natures were and are operative in all of His mediatorial acts, so that while they may be distinguished, they cannot be separated. These great verities must be held firmly by us if we are to believe in and worship *the Christ of God*.

“The Son of God, the second Person in the Trinity, being very and eternal God, of one substance and equal with the Father, did, when the fulness of time was come, take upon Him man's nature, with all the essential properties and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin; being conceived by the power of the Holy Ghost, in the womb of the Virgin Mary, of her substance. So that two whole, perfect, and distinct natures—the Godhead and the manhood—were inseparably joined together in one Person, without conversion, composition, or confusion. Which Person is very God and very man, yet one Christ, the only Mediator between God and man” (Westminster Catechism). This is a clear and helpful setting forth of the

constitution of Christ's theanthropic Person, i.e., His Person as the God-man.

Let it not be supposed that because this is one of the deep mysteries of Christianity, it is a subject in which only theologians are interested, or that it is a matter upon which Christians may lawfully differ. Not so: it is a vital truth which is to be held fast at all costs, a precious truth revealed for the nourishing of faith. Only as the Holy Spirit enables us to receive into our minds and hearts the revelation which the Father has so graciously made of His Son shall we be effectually preserved from the subtle errors of Satan. The value of *what* Christ did depended entirely upon *who* He was, and therefore it is of the very first importance we should attain unto right views of the constitution of His wondrous Person. If the angels “desire to look into” these things (1 Peter 1:12)—figured by the cherubim with their faces turned toward the mercy-seat on the Ark (Exo. 25)—how much more should we who are chiefly concerned therein.

The “doctrine of Christ” or the truth concerning the constitution of His Person is of such fundamental and vital concern that without the belief of it no man can be a Christian: “Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God” (1 John 4:2), that is, born of God, one of His people, and on the side of His truth. On the other hand, “every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God” (1 John 4:3). As John Newton well put it,

“What think ye of Christ? is the test  
To try both your state and your scheme,  
You cannot be right in the rest,  
Unless you think rightly of Him.”

But the great majority of people have no desire to meditate upon *Him*, wishing rather to banish all thoughts of Him from their minds, and even among those who sing, “How sweet the name of Jesus sounds,” few are willing to read *and re-read* the deeper things about His Person.

That which determines our *interest* in a person is our *love* for him. I am not much concerned about the ancestry and history of one who is a stranger to me, but when it comes to a person who is an object of my affections, then the smallest details about him are welcomed by me. A letter filled with little items about the person and doings of her absent son would be dearly treasured by his fond mother, but would be pointless and wearisome to one not acquainted with him. Does not the same principle hold good regarding the blessed Person of our Lord and Saviour? One who is, experimentally, a stranger to Him, cannot be expected to relish a setting forth of the mysterious constitution of His Person, but those who, by grace, esteem Him as the Fairest among ten thousand to their souls, are ready to read, meditate upon, and study, if thereby they may be favoured with clearer and fuller views *of Him*.

Surely this is a subject of thrilling interest, for it is one in which the infinite wisdom of God is most gloriously exhibited. “To unite finite and infinite, almightiness and weakness, immortality and mortality, immutability with a thing subject to change; to have a nature from eternity and yet a nature subject to the revolutions of time; a nature to make a law, and a nature to be subjected to the law; to be God blessed forever in the bosom of His Father, and an infant exposed to calamities from the womb of His mother: terms seeming most distant from union, most incapable of conjunction, to shake hands together, to be most

intimately conjoined; glory and vileness, fulness and emptiness, Heaven and earth; He that made all things, in one Person with a nature that is made; Immanuel, God and man in one; that which is most spiritual to partake of that which is carnal flesh and blood; one with the Father in His Godhead, one with us in His manhood; the Godhead to be in Him in the fullest perfection, and the manhood in the greatest purity; the creature one with the Creator, and the Creator one with the creature. Thus is the incomprehensible wisdom of God declared in the Word being made flesh.

“The terms of this union were infinitely distant. What greater distance can there be than between the Deity and humanity, between the Creator and the creature? Can you imagine the distance between eternity and time, infinite power and miserable infirmity, and immortal Spirit and dying flesh, the highest being and nothing? Yet these are espoused. A God of unmixed blessedness is linked personally with a man of perpetual sorrows; life incapable to die joined to a body in that economy incapable to live without dying first; infinite purity and a reputed sinner, eternal blessedness with a cursed nature, omniscience and ignorance; that which is entirely independent and that which is totally dependent, met together in a personal union, the eternal Son, the seed of Abraham (Heb. 2:16). What more miraculous than for God to become man, and man to become God! That a Person possessed of all the perfections of the Godhead should inherit all the imperfections of the manhood in one Person, sin only excepted; a holiness incapable of sinning to be made sin. Was there not need of an infinite power to bring together terms so far asunder, to elevate the humanity to be capable of, and disposed for, a conjunction with the Deity?” (S. Charnock).

The regulation of our thoughts about Him who is Divinely denominated “Wonderful,” is what every believer should pray and earnestly aim at. It is of deepest importance that we should have scriptural views concerning Him, not only in general, but in detail; not only that we may be fortified against pernicious errors touching His Person, which are now so rife, but also that we may be enabled to appreciate those particular instances in which the Divine wisdom shines forth with greatest splendour. This it is which will give Christ the “pre-eminence” in our minds, revealing how high above the relation and union which exists between Christians and God, is the relation and union between Christ Himself and God. Yes, nothing short of this should be our aim and quest “till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ” (Eph 4:13).

Before seeking to contemplate, separately, the various aspects of and elements in the great mystery of “God manifest in flesh,” we will devote the remainder of this article unto a consideration of some of the reasons *why* it was needful for the Son of God to become the Son of man. The union of two distinct natures in the Person of the Lord Jesus was a fundamental requisite for the union of sinners to God in Christ. We were once with God in Adam, but when he fell, a breach was made: as it is written, “They are all *gone out of the way*” (Rom. 3:12), which clearly implies that they were once found in “the way.” That breach being made, we cannot be restored unto God, unless and until He came to us. A Divine Person must take our nature in order to reconcile our persons to God, and therefore do we read of Christ that He “once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust, that He might *bring us to God*” (1 Peter 3:18). But let us enter a little into detail, even though the ground here be familiar to most of our readers.

First, it was requisite that one of the Divine Persons should be made under that very law which was originally given to man, and which man transgressed. “When the fulness of the time was come, God sent

forth His Son, made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Observe the order: He was “made of a woman” in order to be “made under the law.” He who was “in the form of God” took upon Him “the form of a servant,” that is, entered the place of subjection. He came to repair our lost condition, and in order thereto it was needful that He submit Himself unto the Divine precepts, that by His obedience He might recover what by their disobedience His people had lost. And by the perfect obedience of this august Person, the law was more “magnified” than it had been insulted by our rebellion.

Second, it was requisite that He who would save His people from their sins should suffer the penalty of that law which they had broken. There was an awful curse pronounced upon those who broke the law, and the Saviour must take His people's place and undergo it: “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, *being made a curse for us*” (Gal. 3:13). That curse was death, but how could God the Son die? Only by assuming a mortal nature. Third, it was requisite that in delivering Satan's captives the great Enemy should be conquered by One in the same nature as had been defeated by him. Accordingly it is written, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

Fourth, it was requisite that the Redeemer should take possession of Heaven for us in our nature, and therefore did He say, “I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2). Blessed indeed is that word in Hebrews 6, “That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that *within the veil*; whither the forerunner is *for us entered*, even Jesus” (vv. 18-20). Fifth, it was requisite that the mighty Redeemer should also be capable, experimentally, of having compassion on the infirmities of His people, and how could this be had He never encountered them in His own person? “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Not only was it necessary for God the Son to assume a *human* nature, but also that His humanity should be derived from *the common root* of our first parents. It would not suitably have answered the Divine purpose that Christ's humanity should be created immediately out of nothing, because there had then been no such alliance between Him and us as to lay a foundation of hope of salvation by His undertaking. No, it was essential that He should sustain the character and perform the work of a *redeemer*, that He should be our Goal or *near Kinsman*, for to Him alone belonged the *right* of redemption: see Leviticus 25:48, 49; Ruth 2:20 and 3:9, margin. So it was declared at the beginning: He was to be *the woman's* “Seed” (Gen. 3:15), and thus become our Kinsman. “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are *all of one* (i.e., one stock): for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren” (Heb. 2:11).

Yet, it was also absolutely necessary, notwithstanding, that the nature in which redemption was to be performed should not only be derived from its original root, but also by *such derivation* that it should not be tainted by sin or partake in any degree of that moral defilement in which every child of Adam is conceived and born. It was requisite that our High Priest should be “holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners.” “If the human nature of Christ had partook, in any measure, of that pollution which, since the Fall, is hereditary to us, it would have been destitute of the holy image of God, as we are

prior to regeneration: and, consequently, He would have been rendered incapable of making the least atonement for us. He who is himself sinful, cannot satisfy Divine justice on the behalf of another; because, by one offence, he forfeits his own soul. Here, then, the adorable wisdom of God appears in its richest glory. For though it was necessary our Surety should be man, and the seed of the woman, yet He was conceived in such a manner as to be entirely without sin” (A. Booth).

God brought a clean thing out of an unclean. The manhood of Christ was derived from the common stock of our humanity, yet was it neither begotten nor conceived by carnal concupiscence. Original sin is propagated by ordinary generation, but the Son of man was produced by extraordinary generation. It is by the father's act that a child is begotten in the image and likeness of our first fallen and corrupted father. But though a real Man, Christ was not begotten by a man. His humanity was produced from the substance of Mary by an extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit above nature, and hence His miraculous and immaculate conception is far above the compass of human reason to either understand or express. Through the supernatural agency of the Holy Spirit, the humanity of Christ was conceived by a virgin who had never known a man. It was an act of Omnipotence to produce it; it was an act of Divine holiness to sanctify it; it was an act of Omniscience to unite it unto the Person of the eternal Son of God.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1935

### **Christ in Glory.**

“And they shall hang upon Him all the glory of His Father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons” (Isa. 22:24). “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20, 21).

They are called “vessels” because the Lord forms them for Himself, to show forth His praise; sometimes vessels of honour and glory, because He draws a greater revenue of honor and glory to Himself from them than from all the world beside. In a word, they are called “vessels” because the milk, the wine, the honey, and the oil of Divine grace is bestowed and laid up in them; and out of the fulness of Christ they are daily receiving grace for grace. And as the vessels of a house are its *ornament*, so are fruitful believers the ornament of the Church, and of the great Owner thereof, for He calls them His crown and diadem.

We are here told that these vessels are *of different sizes*: some are vessels of “cups,” and others are vessels of “flagons”; plainly intimating that in God's family there are saints of different stature—there are babes, young men, and fathers; “Unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7). Some are like the smoking flax, others like a flaming lamp; some are like the bruised reed, others like the tall cedar in Lebanon. And if you ask me *why* God will have it so, that the vessels of the house shall be of different sizes, I answer, 1. For the manifestation of His own sovereignty. He is the

Lord of the house, and He will do all His pleasure; and it is the good will and pleasure of God to give more of His grace to one, and to another less; and who may say unto Him, “What doeth Thou?” He is no man's debtor, but may do with His own what He pleases. 2. Because this is for the beauty and ornament of the house. It serves not a little to adorn a house that there are different vessels in it: some more and some less, for different services. The least vessel, like the least member in the natural body has its proper usefulness in the body, so that the one cannot say to the other, “I have no need of thee.” 3. God will have it so, that there may be room for the edifying exercises of the fellowship of saints. If every saint had the same degree of faith, love, knowledge, and other graces, the one could not be edified by the other; but it is otherwise ordered, that the strong may be useful to the weak in strengthening, and that those who have more knowledge and experience than others may communicate of their gifts, to the benefit and edifying of others, until they all come to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

I come now to show that *all* the vessels of different sizes, from vessels of “cups” to vessels of “flagons,” *do hang upon the great Manager*, Jesus Christ, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place. This is what is commonly called the mystical union between Christ and the Church, and is in Scripture set forth to us by a variety of metaphors, sometimes by the union that is between the branches of a tree and the root of it; for as all the branches hang upon the root, and receive their sap and nourishment, growth and fruit from it, so does every believer, whether of a higher or lower stature, receive life, grace, and growth from Christ. “I am like a green fir tree. *From Me* is thy fruit found” (Hosea 14:8). “I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Sometimes this union is represented by the union betwixt the building and the foundation upon which it stands. As the whole building and every stone of it hangs and rests on the foundation and receive their support and stability from it, so doth the whole house of God, and every spiritual, living stone thereof, hang upon Christ by faith of His Spirit's operation: “To whom coming, as unto a living Stone, ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house” (1 Peter 2:4, 5). Sometimes this union is represented to us by the union betwixt the head and the members of the natural body (Eph. 4:15, 16; Col. 2:19); from which you will perceive that the whole body, and every particular member, greater or lesser, hangs upon Christ as by “joints and bands.” But here arises the main question to our present purpose: What *are* these “bands” by which all believers, from the least to the greatest, hang upon Christ? Answer: these “bands” are principally two—the Holy Spirit and faith of the Spirit's operation.

First, I say the Spirit is one, and the principal band whereby believers do hang upon Christ: “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17). By the Holy Spirit the union is made up between Christ and His members: “In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Yes, the Spirit Himself is the band: “We know that He (Christ) abideth in us, by the Spirit which He hath given us” (1 John 3:24). The Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus, by the means of the Word, in a day of regeneration, enters into the soul and quickens it; and in the very quickening by the Spirit, it becomes a member of Christ, and so forever after hangs upon Him as a Nail in a sure place.

Second. Another band by which they all hang upon the Nail is faith by the Spirit's operation—not mere historical, temporary, partial, or legal faith, but a living, working, receiving, justifying, and sanctifying faith, which applies and appropriates Christ by the means of the Word of grace and promise; such a faith as eats the flesh and drinks the blood of Christ; and so lives in and upon Him; according as it is written, “I

am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God” (Gal. 2:20). In a word, faith hangs all its everlasting concerns upon the Nail fastened in a sure place, and there it stays and rests all its cares and concerns; and in this way the soul is kept in perfect peace, knowing that the Nail, being well fastened, will not yield or give way. And thus it is that *all the glory*, the whole offspring and issue, and the vessels of the house, greater and lesser, hang upon our blessed Eliakim.

The next inquiry is, *Why is Christ* constituted sole Manager of His Father's house? Why doth He hang all the vessels *upon Him*, as upon a nail fastened in a sure place? I answer, the management of the house, and of all its concerns, is committed unto Christ because it was the good pleasure of God that it should be so. But although sovereignty is enough to satisfy us upon this head, yet there are some ways of infinite Wisdom to be observed in this constitution of things in the Church, which is the house of the living God; as (1) He only had ability for bearing such a weight: “I have laid help,” saith the Lord, “upon One this is mighty.” (2) Because Christ voluntarily undertook it in the council of peace, saying, “Lo, I come! I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:7, 8), whereupon Jehovah the Father said and determined, “He shall build the temple and bear all the glory” (Zech. 6:13). (3) Hereby a new revenue of glory is brought in to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, even “glory to God in the highest,” higher glory than what comes in by creation and providence. (4) Because hereby His saints are brought to honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. (5) Because this was for the safety and comfort of the children of God. All their everlasting concerns hang upon Him, that they may warble out that song through eternity: “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:12, 13).

Again. See hence why it is that the eyes of the Lord run to and fro, to show Himself strong on behalf of His people in this world; why He rides in the heavens for their help; and makes all things work together for their good. There is good reason for it. They are the offspring and issue of His family; they are the gold and silver vessels of His house; and you know, if a man have power and ability, he will not suffer his offspring to be hurt, or his house to be plundered of his valuable furniture, which he has bought at a dear rate. Hence it is that the Lord watches His house day and night, lest any hurt it. All His saints are in the hand of Christ, and He defies Hell and earth to pluck them out of His hands.

2. See what trust and credit our glorious Kinsman-Redeemer has with His Father. Why, you see how that He puts the whole family under His hand; He hangs the whole glory upon Him: “He hath made Him to be *Head over* all things to the Church, which is His body”; “All Power in heaven and earth is given unto Me,” says Christ; “The Father judgeth no man; but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.” And seeing He has such trust and credit with His Father, what an indignity is done to the Father, and the Son also, when a sinner, through unbelief, declares Him to be unworthy of any credit, and says, practically, that the Nail that God has fastened is loose, weak, or insufficient, and therefore he will not venture the weight of his salvation upon it, but will choose rather to hang upon some nails of his own fastening, such as the nail of an empty profession, the nail of God's general mercy, the nail of legal duties, and obedience, which are all but rusty, weak, broken nails, that will give way and ruin all that depend upon them.

3. See hence one great ground and reason of the perseverance of the saints, and why they cannot fall totally or finally away from a state of grace: because they hang upon the Nail fastened in a sure place. Being the great Manager of His Father's house and family *He* has them in custody, and is to give an account of every vessel of the house unto His Father; and He will make *a good account* of every one of them, and say to His Father, that entrusted them with Him, “Of all Thou hast given Me, I have lost none. Here am I, and the children which Thou hast given me.” If a believer can fall totally or finally away, it is because the Nail may break or be loosed, or because the bands by which they hang upon the Nail may be broken or cut. But none of these can fall out. The Nail, as you heard in the first part of this discourse, is so fixed that Heaven and earth will sooner be dissolved than that it should yield or give way in the least; and as for the bands by which they hang upon the Nail, they are so firm, strong, and well-fastened, that the soul, when it has a view of its security in the light of the Lord, is able to exclaim with Paul, “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution” etc. (Rom. 8:35).
4. See the great difference between the state of a believer now, under a covenant of grace, and the state of Adam, under a covenant of works. Adam, the first covenant-head and representative, though an innocent, yet was but a fallible creature; and being left to the freedom of his own will, that nail gave way, and he and all his posterity fell into a horrible pit of sin and misery, from which the whole creation could not recover them. But the case of the believer is not so, he hangs on a Nail in a sure place; he stands on the foundation God has laid in Zion, against which the gates of Hell shall never prevail. Many a pull and pluck has the devil and the world given at the vessels that hang upon this Nail; and yet by all their power and policy they never were able to carry off a cup, much less a flagon, that did hang upon the Nail fastened in a sure place. To this purpose are those words of Christ, none shall “pluck them out of My hand” (John 10:28).
5. See hence that the saints have no cause of boasting or glorying in themselves, but only in Christ; for *He* is the Nail, upon whom all the glory and all the offspring and issue do hang. Where is boasting? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith. Now the law of faith is to lay the whole weight of our salvation upon Christ; to receive Him and rest upon Him alone for eternal life, and to receive out of His fullness grace for grace. And, therefore, “he that glorieth, let him glory *in the Lord*,” saying, “The Lord is my strength and song, He also is become my salvation.” When the believer finds pride of gifts or grace begin to stir in his heart, he should at once check it by putting these, or the like questions to himself: “What hast thou, O man, that thou hast not *received*? And if thou hast received it, why dost thou boast as though thou hadst not received it? Let none of the branches that grow upon the true Vine boast, as though they had their stand, strength or righteousness *in themselves*. “If thou boast, (remember) thou bearest not the root, but the Root (bearest) thee” (Rom. 11:18). All hang upon the Nail.
6. See hence a good reason for that solemn work and duty of covenanting, by “stretching out her hands unto God” as it is said of Ethiopia (Psa. 68:31). This duty is warranted by Scripture example, and Scripture prophecy concerning the days of the New Testament. As God the Father by solemn oath has constituted His own Son the great Manager of His house, hanging all the offspring and issue upon Him; so it is highly reasonable that all the offspring and issue of the family should confess His deed by solemn oath and covenant, before the whole world, because this is for His declarative glory, upon whom all the glory hangs. It is requisite that we not only believe with the heart unto righteousness, but confess Him with the mouth unto salvation (Rom. 10:10). And this is in a peculiar manner necessary in a day like this, when the

prophets are become such fools, and the spiritual men so mad, as to derogate from the glory of the great Manager of His Father's house His prophetic, priestly, and kingly offices, by tolerating the erroneous, foisting in moral virtue in the room of His everlasting righteousness.

I say, what more just and reasonable in such a case, than that all who love our Lord Jesus Christ and regard His honour and glory, should, in the most solemn manner imaginable, declare their adherence to Him in the presence of angels and men, saying with Joshua “As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.” There are a generation of men in our day, who set up only for a private, selfish kind of religion. If they believe with the heart, they think they have done enough; if they enjoy raptures of love to Christ, they are easy what come of Jerusalem, what come of the Ark of God. Let error in doctrine, corruption in worship, tyranny in government prevail as much as they will, it is all a small matter—these are not the essentials: all is well with them if they have what they call “the Spirit.” But what sort of a spirit is that which follows, cleaves to abjured prelacy, a corrupt backsliding ministry, and judges that deny the obligation of solemn covenants? Surely such a spirit must be the spirit of the old serpent transforming himself into an angel of light. A deceived heart and a subtle devil have turned them aside from the truth.—Ralph Erskine, 1743. (Completed in the June issue.)

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1935

### **Union and Communion.** *2. Mediatorial: (Continued).*

Having sought to point out at the close of last month's article some of the reasons why it was requisite for the Son of God to become incarnate, we shall now endeavour to consider *the nature of the Divine incarnation itself*—exactly what took place when the Word became flesh. Here it behooves us to tread with the utmost reverence and caution, for the ground is truly holy. Only by adhering closely to the Scriptures themselves can we hope to be preserved from error; only as the Holy Spirit Himself is pleased to be our Guide may we expect to be led into the truth thereof; and only as we attend diligently to every jot and tittle in the revelation which God has graciously vouchsafed, will it be possible to obtain anything approaching a complete view of the same. May the Lord enable us to gird up the loins of our mind, and grant that in His light we may see light, as we approach our happy but difficult task.

In Old Testament times God granted various intimations that the coming Deliverer should be both Divine and human. At the beginning God announced to the Serpent (not “promised” unto Adam, be it noted), “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her Seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise His heel” (Gen. 3:15). This was a clear indication that the Saviour should be human, for He would be the woman's “Seed”; yet it as definitely intimated that the Saviour would be more than a man, for it is the work of Omnipotence to destroy Satan's power, hence we read, “The *God* of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20). Expressly was it revealed that “a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel” (Isa. 7:14), “For unto us a child is born, unto us a Son

is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God” etc., (Isa. 9:6). In the ancient “Theophanies” such as in Genesis 18:1, 2; 32:24; Joshua 5:13, 14, etc., the Divine incarnation was anticipated and adumbrated, for in each case the “man” was obviously the Lord Himself in temporary human form.

Now there were three distinct things which belonged to the Word's becoming flesh: the actual production of His humanity, the sanctifying thereof, and His personal assumption of it. The production of it was by miraculous conception, whereby His human nature was under the supernatural operation of God the Spirit framed of the substance of Mary, without man's help: “The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). But let it here be pointed out that in no sense was the Spirit the “father” of Jesus, for He contributed no matter to the making of His manhood, but only miraculously fashioned it out of the seed of His virgin mother. “Although the human nature of Christ was individualized and personalized by a miraculous conception, and not by ordinary generation, yet there was as really and truly a conception and birth as if it had been by ordinary generation. Jesus Christ was really and truly the Son of Mary. He was bone of her bone, and flesh of her flesh. He was of her substance and blood. He was consubstantial with her, in as full a sense as an ordinary child is consubstantial with an ordinary mother” (W. Shedd, 1889).

That which was conceived by Mary, under the mighty power of the Holy Spirit was *not* a human *person*, but a human *nature*; hence was it said “that holy *thing* which shall be born” (Luke 1:35). It is most important to clearly grasp this fact if we are to be preserved from error. When contemplating the ineffable mystery of the Holy Trinity, we saw how necessary it was to distinguish sharply between *nature* and *person*, for while there are three Persons in the Godhead, Their essence or nature is but one. In like manner, it is equally essential that we observe the same distinction when viewing the Person of the Mediator, for though He assumed human nature, He did not take a human person into union with Himself. Thus, we may correctly refer to the *complex person* of Christ, but we must not speak of His *dual personality*.

At the first moment of our Lord's assumption of human nature, that human nature existed only as the “seed” or *un-individualized* substance of the Virgin. But it was not for that reason an *incomplete* humanity, for all the essential *properties* of humanity are in the human nature itself. Christ assumed the human nature *before* it had become a particular person by conception in the womb: He “took on Him the *seed* of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16). The personalizing of His humanity was by its miraculous union with His Deity, though that added no new properties to human nature, but gave it a new and unique *form*. Nor was it simply a material body He assumed, but a human spirit and soul and body; for He was made “in all things like unto His brethren, sin excepted.”

That it was an *impersonal* human nature which the Son of God assumed is clear from His own words in Hebrews 10:5: “A body hast Thou prepared *Me*.” The “body,” put metonymically for the entire human nature was *not* the “Me” or “Person,” but something which He took unto Himself. “For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if One died for all, then were all dead” (2 Cor. 5:14): note carefully it is *one* who died: though possessing two natures, there was but a single Person. The humanity

of Christ—consisting of spirit, and soul and body—had no subsistence in itself or by itself, but only as it was taken into union with a Divine Person. In answering the question, “What was the cause that the Person of the Son of God *did not* join Himself to a perfect *person* of man,” the renowned James Usher (1654) replied, “1. Because then there could not be a personal union of both to make *one* perfect Mediator. 2. Then there should be four Persons in the Trinity. 3. The works of each of the natures could not be counted the works of a whole Person.”

“The *personality* of Jesus Christ is in His Divine nature, and not in His human. Jesus Christ existed a distinct, Divine Person from eternity, the second Person in the adorable Trinity. The human nature which this Divine Person, the Word, assumed into a personal union with Himself, is not and never was a distinct person by itself, and personality cannot be ascribed to it, and does not belong to it any otherwise than as united to the Logos” (S. Hopkins, 1795). As a woman has no *wifely* personality until she is married, so the humanity of Christ had no personality till it was united to Himself: “that holy thing which shall be born of thee (Mary) shall be called *the Son of God*” (Luke 1:35)—receiving its name from the Divine Person with which it was made one. Just as my personality and your personality, from first to last, centres in our *highest* part—the soul—and is only shared in by the body, so the personality of the Mediator centres in His highest part—His Deity—His humanity only sharing in it.

The second thing pertaining to the Mediatorial union was the *sanctifying* of that “seed” which was miraculously conceived in the womb of the Virgin. To sanctify signifies to set apart unto God. For that two things are required: the cleansing of the object or person from pollution, and the enduing it with excellency fit for the Divine service—typified under the ceremonial economy by the washing and then the anointing of the priests, and the sacred vessels. In connection with the humanity of our Lord, the first was secured by God's miraculously preserving it from the slightest taint of defilement, so that the Lamb was “without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). Nothing with the least trace of corruption in it could be joined to the immaculate Son of God. Original sin could not be transmitted to Him, because He was never in Adam nor begotten by a man. The immediate interposition of the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) prevented all possibility of any corruption being transmitted through Mary.

The enduing of Christ's humanity was also by the gracious operation of the Spirit: see Isaiah 11:1, 2. “God, in the human nature of Christ, did perfectly renew that blessed image of His on our nature, which we lost in Adam; with an addition of many glorious endowments which Adam was not made partaker of. God did not renew it in His nature, as though that portion of it whereof He was partaker, had ever been destitute or deprived of it, as it is with the same nature in all other persons. For He derived not His nature from Adam in the same way that we do; nor was He ever in Adam as the public representative of our nature as we were. But our nature in Him had the image of God implanted in it, which was lost and separated from the same nature, in all other instances of its subsistence. It pleased the Father that in Him *all fullness* should dwell, that He should be 'full of grace and truth,' and in all things have the pre-eminence.

“The great design of God in His grace is, that as we have borne the 'image of the first Adam' in the depravation of our natures, so we should bear 'the image of the second' in their renovation. As we have borne 'the image of the earthy,' so we shall bear 'the image of the heavenly' (1 Cor. 15:49). And as He is

the pattern of all our graces, so He is of glory also. All our glory will consist in our being 'made like unto Him,' which what it is doth not yet appear (1 John 3:2). For He shall 'change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body' (Phil. 3:21). Wherefore the fullness of grace was bestowed upon the human nature of Christ, and the image of God gloriously implanted thereon, that it might be the prototype and example of what the church was through Him to be made partaker of" (John Owen).

The Holy Spirit infused into our Saviour's humanity *every* spiritual grace in its fullness and perfection. Each child of God is lovely in His sight because of some spiritual excellence which has been imparted to him—in one it is faith, in another courage, in another meekness; but the humanity of Christ was "*altogether lovely.*" This was foreshadowed of old in the meal offering (Lev. 2): not only was the fine flour "unleavened" (v. 5), but the fragrant "frankincense" was put thereon as a "sweet savour to the LORD" (v. 2). Christ was more holy in His human nature than was Adam when he was first created, and than are the unfallen and pure angels in Heaven, for it received the Spirit "without measure" (John 3:34), and because it was taken into personal union with the Son of the Living God. "His body and mind were the essence of purity. His heart was filled with the love of God, His thoughts were all regularly acted on what was before Him, His will was perfectly sanctified to perform the whole will of God. His affections were most correctly poised and properly fixed on God" (S.E. Pierce).

The third thing pertaining to the Mediatorial union was *the actual assumption* of that human nature which the Holy Spirit framed in the womb of the Virgin, and which He endowed with a fullness of grace and truth, whereby the eternal Son took the same upon Him, that it might have a proper and personal subsistence. A remarkable adumbration of this mystery seems to have been made in the natural world for the purpose of aiding our feeble understandings. This was set forth by one of the earlier Puritans thus: "As the plant called mistletoe *has no root of its own*, but grows and lives in the stock or body of the oak or some other tree, so the human nature having no personal subsistence, is, as it were, ingrafted into the Person of the Son, and is wholly supported and sustained by it, so as it should not be at all, if it were not sustained in that manner" (W. Perkins, 1595).

We believe this act of assumption took place at the very first moment of conception in the Virgin's womb: certainly it was months before the birth, as is clear from Luke 1:43, where Elizabeth, "filled with the Holy Ghost" (v. 41), exclaimed "And whence is this to me, that the mother of my *Lord* should come to me?" This assumption was purely a *voluntary* act on the part of the Son of God: He did not assume human nature from any necessity, but freely; not out of indigence, but bounty; not that *He* might be perfected thereby, but to perfect *it*. It was also a *permanent* act, so that from the first moment of His assumption of our humanity, there never was, nor to all eternity shall there be, any separation between His two natures. Therein the hypostatic union differs from the conjunction between the soul and body in us: at death this conjunction is severed in us; but when Christ died, His body and soul were still united to His Divine Person as much as ever.

As to *how* this act of assumption took place, we cannot say. The Scriptures themselves draw a veil over this mystery: "the power of the Highest shall *overshadow thee*" (Luke 1:35), so that from Mary and from us was hidden that ineffable work of the Most High, forbidding us to make any curious and unholy attempts to pry into it. The Divine transaction occurred, the amazing work was performed, and we are

called upon to believe and adore. That unique act whereby the Maker of all things “took on Him the seed of Abraham” (Heb. 2:16), when the Sovereign over angels “took upon Him the form of a servant” (Phil. 2:7), was the foundation of the Divine relation between the Son of God and the man Christ Jesus. Concerning the blessedness, the marvel, the unfathomable depths, the transcendent wisdom and glory of the act of assumption, we cannot do better than quote again from that prince of theologians, John Owen:

“His conception in the womb of the Virgin, as unto the integrity of human nature, was a miraculous operation of the Divine power. But the prevention of that nature from any subsistence of its own, by its assumption into personal union with the Son of God, in the first instance of its conception, is that which is *above all miracles*, nor can be designed by that name. A *mystery* it is, so far above the order of all creating or providential operations, that it wholly transcends the sphere of them that are most miraculous. Herein did God glorify all the properties of the Divine nature, acting in a way of infinite wisdom, grace, and condescension. The depths of the mystery hereof are open only unto Him whose understanding is infinite, which no created understanding can comprehend.

“All other things were produced and effected by an outward emanation of power from God: He said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. But this assumption of our nature into hypostatical union with the Son of God, the constitution of one and the same individual person in two natures so infinitely distinct, as those of God and man, whereby the eternal was made in time, the infinite became finite, the immortal mortal, yet continuing eternal, infinite, immortal, is that singular expression of Divine wisdom, goodness, and power, wherein God will be admired and glorified unto all eternity. Herein was that change introduced into the whole first creation, whereby the blessed angels were exalted, Satan and his works ruined, mankind recovered from a dismal apostacy, all things made new, all things in heaven and earth reconciled and gathered into one Head, and a revenue of eternal glory raised unto God, incomparably above what the first constitution of all things in the order of nature could yield unto Him.”

“And the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14): not by His Deity being converted into matter, nor simply by His appearing in the outward semblance of man; but by actually assuming that “holy thing” which was framed by the Spirit and conceived by the Virgin. The Word “flesh” in John 1:14 includes more than a physical body—compare Romans 3:20 and 1 Corinthians 1:29 for the scope of this term. The eternal Word took upon Him a complete and perfect human nature, with all the faculties and members pertaining to such. “Choosing from the womb of the Virgin a temple for His residence, He who was the Son of God became also the Son of man: not by confusion of substance, but by a unity of person. For we assert such a connection and union of the Divine with the humanity, that each nature *retains* its properties entire, and yet both together constitute one Christ” (John Calvin, “Institutes”).

This union of the Divine and human natures in the Mediator is not a *consubstantial* one such as pertains to the three Persons in the Godhead, for They are united among Themselves in one Essence: They all have but one and the same nature and will; but in Christ there are two distinct natures and wills. Nor is the Mediatorial union like unto the *physical*, whereby a soul and body are united in one human being, for that constitution is dissolved by death; whereas the hypostatic union is indissoluable. Nor is the Mediatorial union analogous unto the *mystical*, such as exists between Christ and His Church, for though that be indeed a most glorious union, so that we are in Christ and He in us, yet we are not *one person* with Him;

and thus the mystical union falls far below that ineffable and incomprehensible oneness which exists between the Son of God and the Son of man.

Thomas Goodwin, of blessed memory among lovers of deep expository works, was wont to call this Mediatorial union “the *middle* union,” coming in as it does between the union of the three Divine Persons in the Godhead, and the Church's union with God in Christ. We may also perceive and admire the wisdom of the eternal Three in selecting the middle One to be the Mediator; as we may also discern and adore the propriety of choosing the *Son* to be the one who should enter the place of *obedience*. He who eternally subsisted between the Father and the Spirit, has, by virtue of His incarnation, entered the place of “Daysman” between God and men; for in consequence of His union with the Divine Essence, He is able to “take hold” of God on the one side, and in consequence of His union with our humanity, He is able to take hold of us on the other side; so that He “takes hold of both” as Job desired (9:33).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1935

**Christ in Glory.**

*(Concluded).*

The second use of the doctrine (of assurance) may be by way of *trial and examination*. Is it so, that believers are the offspring and issue of the house of God? then it concerns every one to try himself, whether he be of that blessed progeny. We read (Heb. 12) of bastards in the visible church, who cannot be reckoned among this number. They are indeed called the children of the kingdom; but they are such as do not inherit the kingdom of God, because they will be cast into utter darkness. And, therefore, it concerns us to see whether or not we be the lawfully-begotten children of Zion, the true offspring and issue of God's household and family. I remember, in the doctrinal part, I told you why they are called the offspring and issue; and now I would offer two or three remarks whereby they may be known.

1. All the offspring and issue of God's family have passed through the strait gate of the new birth; for, says Christ, "except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3). But, say you, How may I *know* if I be a partaker of the new birth? I answer, the new birth brings a new state or standing with it. You have quitted your standing upon the law-bottom or works and all foundations of sand, and taken up your only stand upon the foundation laid in Zion, which is Christ Jesus. The new birth brings a new heart along with it: "A new heart also will I give you" (Ezek. 36:26). The new birth brings with it new principles of action: a principle of life, of faith and love; new motives and ends. Self-love constrains the sinner, but the love of Christ, and the glory of God constrains the new convert to duty. The new birth makes a man to

love the new covenant, even a covenant of rich grace and promise, saying, “This is all my salvation.” The new birth produces new laws in a man. He was formerly under the law of sin and death; but now he delights in the Law of the Lord after the inner man. The new birth brings a new language with it. The man gets a new tongue: formerly he spoke the language of Ashod, but now the language of Canaan. The new birth produces new views, both of things temporal and eternal. So, then, try yourselves by these, whether you be among the true offspring and issue of the house of God: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

2. All the offspring and issue of the house have seen their Father's countenance; and they are always glad at the sight of it. Like David, “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psa. 4:7). 3. All the offspring of God's family, each one of them, resembles the children of the King, because they bear a likeness unto their Father and His firstborn Son. By beholding His glory they are changed into the same image. They hate themselves because of their dissimilitude through remaining sin and indwelling corruption, feeling with Paul, “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom 7:24). 4. All the offspring of God's family have faith in Christ, hence they are called believers, because they believe in and believe on His name; “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name” (John 1:12). The very name of Christ is so sweet to them that it is like “ointment poured forth”; and when the Holy Spirit works faith in them, if they had all the souls that ever sprang from Adam dwelling in their bodies, they could commit the keeping of them all to Him.

5. All the offspring of the house are acquainted with the Shepherd's voice, the voice of His Word, and the voice of His rod: “My sheep hear My voice” (John 10:27). When they hear His promising voice, they are “filled with joy and peace in believing”; when they hear His commanding voice, they are ready to say “I will run the way of Thy commandments; only give grace to obey, and command what Thou wilt”; when they hear His threatening voice, they tremble at His Word; when they hear His correcting voice in worldly trials and crosses, they are ready to say with David, “I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because Thou didst it” (Psa. 39:9). 6. All the offspring and issue of the family love to lisp out their Father's name, crying, “Abba, Father.” It is true, through the prevalency of unbelief and a sense of guilt and filth, they blush when they speak to Him as a Father; but yet, now and then, as faith gets up its head, they will be ready to cry as the church, “Doubtless Thou art our Father, though Abraham be ignorant of us, and Israel acknowledge us not: Thou, O LORD, art our Father, our Redeemer” (Isa. 63:16). 7. If you be the true offspring of this family, your Father's presence will be your delight, and His absence, hiding, and frowns will be an intolerable affliction. Christ the firstborn of the family never complained so much of all His other troubles as when His Father forsook Him: “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” (Psa. 22:1). Just so it is with the genuine offspring, as you see in David, Asaph, Heman, and others.

8. You will dearly love all that bear their Father's image, and the image of Him who is the express image of the Father; and the more resemblance they have unto Him, you will love them the better: “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). You will esteem them as David did, the “excellent of the earth,” with whom will be all your delight. Lastly, all the

offspring, and issue of God's house have a zeal for the standing of their Father's house: they love the habitation of it, and the place where His honour dwells; and therefore will have something of the spirit of the Firstborn, of whom it is said, "The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up" (Psa. 69:9). Is it possible that a true child of a family may be unconcerned when he sees robberies committed in his house, or the house of his Father turned into a den of thieves? or will a true-born child herd and associate himself with such without opposing them and witnessing against them? A true child of the family will be ready to say of such, as Jacob did of Simeon and Levi, "Simeon and Levi are brethren; instruments of cruelty are in their habitations. O my soul, come not thou into their secret" (Gen 49:5, 6). Thus I have given you some marks which have a relation to the first character to believers in the text.

I come next to pursue a trial with an eye toward the second character or designation of vessels of different sizes—"vessels of cups and vessels of flagons," all hanging upon the "Nail fastened in a sure place." In the professing church there are vessels of mercy and vessels of wrath, vessels of honour fitted for the Master's use, and vessels of dishonour fitted to destruction. Now here some may readily put the question, "How may I know if I be a vessel of mercy and honour?" For clearing the way of answering this question, you will consider that all the children of men sprang from Adam by natural generation. The elect of God, as well as others, are, in the eye of the law, vessels of wrath fitted for destruction, through the pollution and guilt of original and actual sin: and until God comes in a day of power, and digs the vessel of mercy from under the filth and rubbish of the fall of Adam, no man can make a difference betwixt the vessels of mercy and of wrath, because this is among the secret things that belong unto the Lord. But if the question be, "How may a person know he be yet a vessel of mercy *fitted by regeneration and sanctifying grace* for the Master's use? Hath God yet formed me for Himself? Hath He taken me out of nature's quarry, out of the miry clay, and washed, and justified, and sanctified me in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God?"—Now I say, if *this* be the question, I will give you a few marks of the vessels of mercy and honour.

1. Every vessel of mercy in the house of our God (whether they be vessels of "cups" or vessels of "flagons") has seen himself to be a vessel of wrath by nature, condemned already, full of the vermin of sin and corruption, treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath. Hence, all God's Israel are ready to take up that melancholy song "A Syrian ready to perish was I; at that time I was afar off, an alien to the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger to the covenants of promise, without God, without Christ, and without hope in the world." Hence, 2. All the vessels of mercy are taken up in admiring the rich and free mercy of God in taking up the like of them from among the pots: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration" (Titus 3:5). O, says Paul, I was a "blasphemer, and injurious: but I obtained mercy" (1 Tim. 1:13). "He brought me up," says David, "out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God" (Psa. 40:2, 3).

3. All God's vessels of mercy have undergone the hammer of the law, in a greater or less measure: "Is not My Word like a hammer," saith the Lord, "that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). The law is a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ. So much hammering by the law is necessary, and no more, as serves to beat the heart and hands of a sinner off from the broken nail of the law, in point of righteousness: "I, through the law," say Paul, "am dead to the law" (Gal. 2:19). So much of this hammer is needful to beat

down the vain and towering imaginations of our own goodness, holiness, wisdom, and righteousness. The Dagon of self, and all the shapes and forms of it, must be broken down forever. The vessel of mercy shall never more say “God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men,” or with Laodicea, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and in need of nothing.” 4. All the vessels of mercy are made heartily content to change their holding. All mankind have their holding on the first or second Adam; they are either hanging by the broken nail of the Covenant of Works, or by the Gospel nail of the Covenant of Grace; they are either seeking life and righteousness by the works of the law, or by the grace of the Gospel. Now, in a day of conversion, the sinner having his hands knocked off from his first holding, he, by the hand of faith, which is God's gift, receives Christ, and takes hold of that covenant whereof He is Head, saying, “In Him will I be justified, and in Him will I glory; for in Him have I righteousness and strength. He is to me the end of the law for righteousness: for He was made sin for us, though He knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.”

5. All the vessels of mercy are melted in the fire of Gospel grace and love, and made pliable to the will of God; the heart of stone is melted into a heart of flesh (Ezek. 36:26); the iron sinew of the obstinate will, through the heat of Divine love, is made to give way, and yield unto the Divine will (Psa. 110:3). The language of every vessel of mercy is, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” The adamant heart is dissolved into evangelical repentance, so that the man now looks on Him whom he had pierced, and mourns (Zech. 12:10). 6. All the vessels of the house are washed, and will be frequently washing themselves, in the fountain of a Redeemer's blood, from sin and uncleanness (Zech. 13:1). The vessels of the house, through remaining corruption, temptation, and frequent falls into the puddle of actual sin, gather dust, and become dim and unfit for the use and service of the great Father and Manager of the house; and, therefore, He will have them sprinkled with clean water; He will have their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and their bodies washed with pure water: “If I wash thee not,” says Christ to Peter, “thou hast no part with Me” (John 13:8). And this washing is what they themselves long for, especially when defiled with any fall. Hence they cry with David, “Wash me thoroughly from mine iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin” (Psa. 51:2); and again, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow” (Psa. 51:7).

7. All the vessels of the house, from the least to the greatest, have the name of the Father of the house, and of the Manager of the house, engraven upon them. It has been, and still is, the custom of great men to have their names and arms graven on their gold and silver vessels. So it is in the house of our God. All the vessels of mercy have *His* name and motto engraven upon them: “Lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, having His Father's name written in their foreheads” (Rev. 14:1). They have the name of Christ, the great Manager, written on them, particularly that name “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6); and in this name of His do they rejoice continually, for in His righteousness are they exalted. And then, as we are told (Rev. 3:12), the name of the new Jerusalem, which cometh down from above, out of Heaven, is engraven on them; for they prefer Jerusalem to their chiefest joy. In a word, God's name, His glory, honour, and authority, His truth, His worship, His cause and interest, the Word of God, the testimony of Jesus, the prerogatives of His crown and kingdom—every true believer hath these as it were, engraven on his heart, and will study to maintain them before the world.

8. If you be the vessels of mercy and honour, the Master of the house will now and then be making use of you by pouring the wine, the oil, the water, or milk of His grace and Spirit into you: “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). Every vessel of the house is anointed with the fresh oil of the Holy Spirit: “we have an unction from the Holy One”; and they that lack this anointing of the Spirit, in one degree or another, the Manager of the house will not own him as His: “If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9). They will be found among the foolish virgins, whose vessels had no oil when the midnight cry was heard, “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him” (Matt. 25:6). But I say all the vessels of mercy have a greater or smaller measure of the anointing of the Spirit: and every anointing of the Spirit enlargeth the vessel to hold more, insomuch that through the frequent communications of the Spirit, a “cup” vessel at first becomes a large vessel or a “flagon” one, until it be ready to be transplanted from the lower to the upper story of the house, where every vessel shall be filled brimfull of God.

Question: Some exercised soul may be ready to say, “O how happy would I be, if I knew that I were but the least vessel in the house of God, hanging on the 'Nail fastened in a sure place!' but, alas! I am such a poor, worthless, useless creature, that I am afraid I am none of them.” Answer: It is the nature of all the vessels of mercy in the house of God, yea, of the great flagons, to *esteem themselves worthless* and among the least, yea, less than the least of all the vessels of the house. Says the Apostle Paul, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8). And the lower they sink in their own eyes, the higher do they rise in the esteem of the great Lord of the house, and the more of His grace and favour do they receive; for He giveth grace to the humble.

Objection 2: Another may say, “I am so broken and tossed with worldly trials, that I am ready to think I am none of the offspring or vessels of His house.” Answer: “Many are the afflictions of the righteous,” and “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Christ Himself suffered before He entered into His glory, and so have all the cloud of witnesses (Heb. 11); and, therefore, it is a false conclusion to think you do not belong to the Lord because of multiplied roots of affliction; for “if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons” (Heb. 12:8) for “whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth” (Heb 12:6). God's gold and silver vessels go frequently into the furnace; and there is a need be for it, to purge away their dross; and, therefore, they learn to say with Job, “when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (23:10).

Objection 3. “I am such a vile, polluted creature, that I cannot think I am one of His offspring by regeneration, but rather a vessel of wrath.” Answer: God will not cast away His gold and silver vessels because of the dross and alloy of sin and corruption that is about them. A man will take up a vessel of his house, though it be lying on a dunghill. So David, Solomon, Peter and many other of the saints, fell in to the mire of sin; and yet the Lord took them from the dunghill, and made them like the wings of a dove; and, therefore, seeing God will not cast off forever, do not you cast yourself off.

Objection 4. “I am so harassed with Satan and his fiery darts, that I am afraid I am not one of God's children. I am tempted to evils and abomination that I am afraid to name to any in the world.” Answer: Christ Himself was tempted in all things as we are, that He might be a merciful High Priest to sympathize with those that are tempted. Consider again, for thy encouragement, that usually the devil gives the sorest

pulls and pushes at the gold and silver vessels of God's family; and if you did not belong to God, Satan would not pursue so much. When Israel came out of Egypt, then Pharaoh and his hosts pursued most vigorously. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly.”

Objection 5. “I am not one of the offspring or vessels; for God is hiding, and carrying Himself to me as an enemy, that the very remembrance of Him is a terror to me.” Answer: This is no unprecedented case among God's children. David, when he remembered God, was “troubled”; Asaph cries, “Is His mercy clean gone?” (Psa. 77:8). Heman also, “While I suffer Thy terrors I am distracted” (Psa. 88:15); yea, Christ, the firstborn and beloved Son, is under such an agony of soul that He cries out, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). It is hard to tell how far fatherly chastisement may be carried; but this is an uncontroverted truth, that the foundation of God standeth sure; and God will never disinherit any of the offspring and issue, or cast away any of the vessels which hang by a faith of His operation upon the “Nail fastened in a sure place.” This truth will yield comfort, though the present aspect of providence gives just ground to fear some shaking judgment is not far off, on account of the abounding sin of all ranks, a condemned Gospel, and the blood of those whose souls are crying from under the altar. But whatever calamities may be coming, though the world should be unhinged, and nothing be heard or seen but the confused noise of warriors and garments rolled in blood, “yet verily it shall be well with the righteous.” Here is comfort in case of rents, and divisions, and manifold disorders in the visible church, as there is at this day; men beating their fellow servants, and putting them out of the house for their faithfulness to the Master of the house, and preferring the man with the gold ring to the man who is rich in faith and an heir of the kingdom. These, or the like evils, take place in the visible church, and have a melancholy aspect. But here is comfort; the Lord is looking on. He permits and overrules all these confusions and disorders for His own holy and wise ends, for the trial of faith and patience, and to show His own skill in bringing order out of confusion. And when He hath performed His whole work in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem, He will reign among His ancients gloriously. Here is comfort to the Lord's remnant, when there are few or none of the rulers or nobles of the land to own the cause of Christ, or to put their hand to the rebuilding of the walls or gates of Jerusalem, lying in rubbish, as in the days of former reformation in this land. The great Zerubbabel can carry on His work either with them or without them; for it is “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 4:6). The Man whose name is “The Branch” shall come out of His place; He shall build the Temple, and bear all the glory forever and ever, Amen. (Ralph Erskine, 1743).

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1935

### **A Satanic Device.**

One device that Satan hath to keep souls off from holy exercises and religious services is by moving them to make false inferences from those blessed and glorious things that Christ hath done. As, that Jesus Christ has done all for us, therefore there is nothing for us to do, but to joy and rejoice. He hath perfectly justified us, fulfilled the law, satisfied Divine justice, pacified His Father's wrath, is gone to Heaven to prepare a place for us, and in the meantime to intercede for us; and therefore away with praying, mourning, hearing, striving, etc. Ah! what a world of professors hath Satan drawn in these days from religious services by working them to make such sad, wild, and strange inferences from the sweet and excellent things that the Lord Jesus hath done for His beloved ones. Now the remedies against this device are these:

1. To dwell as much on those Scriptures that show you the duties *and services that Christ requires of you*, as upon those Scriptures that declare to you the precious and glorious things that Christ hath done for you. It is a sad and dangerous thing to have two eyes to behold our dignity and privileges, and not one to see our duties and services. I should look with one eye upon the choice and excellent things that Christ hath done for me, to raise up my heart to love Christ with the purest love, and to joy in Christ with the strongest joy, and to lift up Christ above all, who hath made Himself to be my all; and I should look with the other eye upon those services and duties that the Scriptures require of those for whom Christ hath done such blessed things, as upon that of the Apostle: "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20). And that,

“Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Cor. 15:58). And that “And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). And that “Rejoice evermore” and “pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:16, 17). And that “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). And that “Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching” (Heb. 10:24, 25). Now a soul that would not be drawn away by this device of Satan, he must not look with a squint eye upon *these* blessed Scriptures, and abundance more of like import, but he must dwell upon them; he must make these Scriptures to be his chiefest and choicest companions, and this will be a happy means to keep him close to Christ and His service in these times, wherein many turn their backs upon Christ, under pretense of being interested in the great things that have been acted by Christ.

2. The second remedy against this device of Satan is to consider that the great and glorious things which Jesus Christ hath done and is a-doing for us, should be so far from taking us off from religious services and pious performances, that they should be the *greatest motives and encouragements* to the performance of them that may be, as the Scriptures do abundantly evidence. I will only instance in some, as, “That we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). Christ hath freed you from all your enemies: from the curse of the law, the predominant damnatory power of sin, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the torments of hell; *but what is the end and design* of Christ in doing these great and marvellous things for His people? It is not that we should throw off duties of righteousness and holiness, but that our hearts may be the more free and sweet in all holy duties and heavenly services. So says the Apostle, “I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty”; mark what follows: “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God” (2 Cor. 6:18 and 7:1). Again, “The grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, *teaching us that*, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, *zealous of good works*” (Titus 2:11-14). Ah, souls! I know no such arguments to work you to a lively and constant performance of all heavenly services, like those that are drawn from the consideration of the heart and glorious things that Christ hath done for you; and if such arguments will not take you and win upon you, I do not think the throwing of hell fire in your faces will ever do it.

3. The third remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider that those precious souls which Jesus Christ hath done and suffered as much for as He hath for you, *were exceedingly active and lively in all religious services and heavenly performances*. He did and suffered as much for David as for you, and yet who more in praying and praising God than David? “Seven times a day will I praise the Lord.” Who more in the studying and meditating on the Word than David? “Thy law is my meditation day and night.” The same truth we run and read in Jacob, Moses, Job, Daniel, and the rest of the holy prophets and Apostles, for whom Christ hath done as much for as for you. Ah, how have all those worthies abounded in works of righteousness and holiness, to the praise of free grace! Certainly Satan hath got the upper hand of

those souls that do argue thus: Christ hath done such and such glorious things for us, therefore we need not make any care and conscience of doing such and such religious services as men say the Word calls for. If this logic be not from hell, what is? Ah, were the holy prophets and Apostles alive to hear such logic from out of the mouths of such as profess themselves to be interested in the great and glorious things that Jesus Christ hath done for His chosen ones, how would they blush to look upon such souls! and how would their hearts grieve and break within them to hear the language and to observe the actings of such souls! He that talks of Heaven, but *doeth not the will of God*, is like him that gazed upon the moon, but fell into the pit.

4. The fourth remedy against this device of Satan is seriously to consider that those who do not walk in the ways of righteousness and holiness, who do not wait upon God in the several duties and services which are commanded by Him, *cannot have that evidence to their own souls of this righteousness before God*, of their fellowship and communion with God, of their blessedness here and their happiness hereafter, as those souls have who love and delight in the ways of the Lord, who are always best when they are most in the works and service of the Lord. “Little children,” saith the Apostle, “let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous” (1 John 3:7). “In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (1 John 3:10). “If ye know that He is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of Him” (1 John 2:29) and “He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him. But whoso keepeth His Word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in Him. He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:4-6). “If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: but if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:6, 7). So James: “What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him?” *i.e.* it cannot. “For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 2:14, 26). To look after holy and heavenly works is the best way to preserve the soul from being deceived and deluded by Satan's devices, and by sudden flashes of joy and comfort; holy works being a more conscious and constant pledge of the precious Spirit, begetting and maintaining in the soul more solid, pure, clear, strong, and lasting joy. Ah souls! as you would have in yourselves a constant and blessed evidence of your fellowship with the Father and Son, and of the truth of grace, and of your future happiness, look that you cleave close to holy services, and that you turn not your backs upon religious duties.

5. The fifth remedy against this device of Satan is solemnly to consider that there are other choice and glorious ends for the saints' performance of religious duties than for the justifying of their persons before God, or for the purchasing of the pardon of sin, namely, *to testify* their justification. A good tree cannot but bring forth good fruits (Matt. 6:17); to testify their love to God, and their sincere obedience to the commands of God; to testify their deliverance from spiritual bondage, to evidence the indwelling of the Spirit, to stop the mouths of the worst of men, and to gladden those righteous souls whom God would not have you sadden. These, and abundance of other choice ends there be, why those that have an interest in the glorious doings of Christ, should, notwithstanding that, keep close to the holy duties and religious services that are commanded by Christ. And if these considerations will not prevail with you to wait upon God in holy and heavenly duties, I am afraid if one should rise from the dead, his arguments would not

win you; but you would hold on in your sins and neglect God's service, though you lost your souls forever” (Thomas Brooks, 1652).

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July, 1935

### **Union and Communion.** 2. *Mediatorial (Completed).*

Christ is not now two persons combined together, but one Person having two natures. He is both God and man, as many Scriptures plainly affirm, possessing in Himself both Deity and humanity. “Unto us a child is born,” there is His humanity; “Unto us a Son is given: and His name shall be called The mighty God” (Isa. 9:6), there is His Deity. “That holy thing which shall be born of thee,” there is His humanity; “shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35), there is His Deity—“*called* the Son of God” means He shall be *owned* as such: “all shall so acknowledge Him: either here in gracious confession, or in glorious confusion hereafter” (Thomas Adams, 1660). “God sent forth his Son,” there is His Deity; “made of a woman” (Gal. 4:4), there is His humanity. “Made of the seed of David according to the flesh,” there is His humanity; “And declared to be the Son of God” (Rom. 1:3, 4), there is His Deity, both making up the one Person of “Jesus Christ our Lord.”

Having considered the needs-be for the Divine incarnation, having sought to contemplate the nature thereof, we now turn unto some of the *effects and consequences* of the same. We shall seek to examine, first, the effects of the Mediatorial union with respect unto the Divine nature of Christ; second, with respect unto His human nature; and third with respect unto His complex Person.

When the eternal Word became flesh, His Divine nature underwent *no* change whatsoever. Such a thing could not be: God is no more subject to alteration or variation than He is to death. Being God the Son, the

Word was immutable, and must remain forever the same. To say that His Deity was humanized is to assert an utter impossibility. The incarnation of the Beloved of the Father, despoiled Him of none of His perfections. Had He lost (or “emptied” Himself of) any of those attributes proper to the Divine nature, He could not have been a sufficient Mediator. That is properly a “change,” when anything ceases to be what it was before; but such was not the case with Immanuel. It was none other than *God* who was “manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), so that the incarnate Son could say, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

When it is affirmed “The Word was made flesh and tabernacled among us,” the Spirit was careful to move John to at once add, “and we beheld His glory.” *What* “glory”? the “glory” of His meekness, gentleness, compassion? No, but “the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father.” Though He now became what He was not previously—united to manhood—yet He ceased not to be in Himself all that He was before. “He assumed our nature without laying aside His own. When the soul is united to the body, doth it lose any of those perfections that are proper to its nature? Is there any change either in the substance or qualities of it? No; but it makes a change in the body; and of a dull lump it makes a living mass, conveys vigour to it, and by its power quickens it to sense and motion. So did the Divine nature and human remain entire: there was no change of the one into the other, as Christ by a miracle changed water into wine, or men by art change sand or ashes into glass” (S. Charnock).

During the days of His humiliation, the Divine *glory* of the Mediator was partly veiled. There was no halo of Divine light encircling His head, to mark Him out as Immanuel. There was no visible retinue of angels in attendance upon Him, to signify the Lord of Heaven was tabernacling upon earth. Instead, He was born in a manger, grew up in the home of a peasant family, and when He began His public ministry His forerunner was clothed in a garment of camel's hair and His ambassadors were humble fishermen. Yet even then His Divine glory was not completely eclipsed. The character He displayed was “Fairer than the children of men” (Psa. 45:2). His teaching was such that even the officers sent to arrest Him testified, “never man spake like this Man” (John 7:46). His miracles witnessed to His Almightyness. Even in death He could not be hid: the centurion exclaiming, “Truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54).

Yet the partial veiling of His Divine glory in nowise wrought any change in, still less did it injure the Divine nature itself, any more than the sun undergoes any change or is to the slightest degree injured when it is hid by the interposition of a cloud. “When He prays for the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5), He prays that a glory He had in His deity might shine forth in His Person as Mediator, and be evinced in that height and splendour suitable to His dignity, which had been so lately darkened by His abasement; that as He had appeared to be the Son of man in the infirmity of the flesh, He might appear to be the Son of God in the glory of His Person, that He might appear to be the Son of God and the Son of man in one Person” (S. Charnock). At His ascension, nothing was added to His essential Person: His Divine glory did but shine forth more distinctly when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

We turn next to consider the consequence of His human nature being taken into union with the Son of God. And, first, negatively. His humanity was not invested with Divine attributes. As the Divine nature was not humanized at the incarnation, neither was the humanity deified: there was no communication of

properties from one to the other; both preserved their integrity, and remained in possession of their distinctive qualities. “I do not hereby ascribe the infusion of omniscience, of infinite understanding, wisdom, and knowledge into the human nature of Christ. It was and is a creature, finite and limited, nor is a capable subject of properties absolutely infinite and immense. Filled it was with light and wisdom to the utmost capacity of a creature. But it was so, not by being changed into a Divine nature or essence, but by the communication of the Spirit unto it without measure. The Spirit of the Lord did rest upon Him: Isaiah 11:1-3” (John Owen).

There were three respects in which the humanity of Christ underwent no change by virtue of its union with His Divine Person. First, with respect to its *essence*: intrinsically and integrally it was and forever remains a real and true humanity. Second, in respect to its *properties*: “And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:52); when He prayed “not My will, but Thine, be done” (Luke 22:42), it was the subjecting of the human unto the Divine. Third, with respect to its *operations*: every human faculty was normally exercised by “the man Christ Jesus.” He hungered and thirsted, ate and drank; He wearied and slept; He sorrowed and wept; He suffered and died. Some things as a man He knew not (Mark 13:32), except as they were *given* Him by revelation (Rev. 1:1).

Positively, the humanity was elevated unto a state infinitely surpassing that of every other creature in earth and Heaven. Though the Godhead received nothing from the manhood, yet the manhood itself—taken into union with the second Person in the Trinity—was immeasurably enriched and exalted to unspeakable dignity, infinitely above that of the angels. He who is Head of the Church has, in all things, “the pre-eminence.” Not only was the Divine *wisdom* more illustriously displayed in the wondrous constitution of the Mediator than in any or all the other works of God, but His *grace* was also more gloriously evidenced unto the man Christ Jesus than it was in the saving of sinners. The highest act of Divine favour was exercised when the woman's “Seed” was raised high above all other creatures, and made Jehovah's “Fellow.” Wherein could the Seed of Abraham merit such an inestimable honour! It was *grace*, pure and simple, grace in its most superlative exercise, which conferred upon the humanity of Christ a dignity and glory immeasurably exceeding that possessed by the cherubim and seraphim.

The Man Christ Jesus was fore-ordained before the foundation of the world (1 Peter 1:20) unto union with the second Person in the Godhead, and therefore the Divine grace shown unto Him in *His* predestination was greater far than that shown unto *us*, by how much more the privileges ordained were greater. Marvelous grace indeed is it that we should be elevated unto a place in the family of God and “made neigh” (Eph. 2:13) unto Him; but that falls far, far short of the Man Christ Jesus being actually united to the immediate Person of the Son of God; and in consequence thereof being not only “the *Firstborn* (Chief) of every creature,” but “the Man that is *My Fellow*, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zech. 13:7)—advanced unto a fellowship in the Society of the blessed Trinity. This it was which stamped an infinite worth upon the whole work of the Mediator.

“Behold My servant, whom I uphold; *Mine Elect*, in whom My soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1). God's “Elect” was the Man whom He eternally chose to taken into personal union with His co-essential and co-equal Son. This is the One in whom He eternally delighted, ever viewing Him in the glass of His decrees. This is “the Man of His right hand, the Son of man whom He madest strong *for Himself*” (Psa. 80:17). This was

indeed grace worthy of God, such as can never be fully conceived by any finite intelligence, no not by the saints in Heaven through the ages of eternity. In the Person of the God-man, grace, sovereign grace, was exercised in its first and greatest act, shining forth in its utmost splendour and discovered in its utmost freeness. For again we say, there could be nothing whatever in the unindividualized “seed” of the woman which could be, to the smallest degree, entitled unto such supernal glory.

It was therefore meet and requisite that grace and glory should be communicated and bestowed upon the humanity of Christ, proportionately to the high dignity of its being taken into union with the Son. “1. Preeminence, to all other individuals of human nature: the humanity of Christ was chosen and preferred to the grace of union with the Son of God, above them all; it has a better subsistence than they had, and has obtained a more excellent name than they, and is possessed of blessings and privileges above all creatures. All which is not of any merit in it, but of the free grace of God. 2. Perfect holiness and impeccability: it is called *that holy Thing*: it is eminently and perfectly so, without original sin, or any actual transgression; it is not conscious of any sin, never committed any, nor is it possible it should. 3. A communication of habitual grace to it in the greatest degree; it is, in this respect, fairer and more beautiful than any of the sons of men: grace being poured into it in great plenty; it is anointed with the oil of gladness above its fellows; that is, with the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit” (John Gill, 1770).

Consider, briefly, some of the super-excellent perfections of the Man Christ Jesus. There is a *wisdom* in Him which is far above what all other creatures have attained or can reach unto, so that in Him “Are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). It is true those treasures of wisdom are not of that richness and extent as the wisdom that dwells in God Himself, for the manhood of Christ is not omniscient; yet by virtue of its union with the Son of God, it has been taken into all the counsels of the Godhead, and knows all decrees concerning the past, the present, and the future.

The same holds good of His *power*. Though the manhood of Christ has not been endowed with omnipotence, yet it approximates as closely thereto, as any creature could, for all power has been given to Him, both in Heaven and earth (Matt. 28:18), so that the rule of the universe is committed to Him, He upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). God “hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of *man*” (John 5:27).

The image of God shines brightly in Christ's *independency* and *sovereignty*. This incommunicable attribute of Deity is reflected to a high degree in Him who has been made “both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), being one of the brightest jewels in the crown of His glorified humanity. This personal prerogative of the Son of God is now shared in by the nature which He took into union with Himself, as the queen shares the palace of the king. A dependent “thing” has been made an independent creature—what a marvel of marvels!

So too of His *holiness*. There is that transcendency of holiness in the Man Christ Jesus that is not found in all other creatures put together, and in this respect also He is “the Image of the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). There is in Him a holiness over and above that grace communicated to Him “without measure” by the Spirit: it is a relative holiness of a man united to the second Person of the Godhead, which casts the shine of its superlative glory upon that which is habitual or communicated. It is *this* which gave infinite value to all He did.

Coming now to the consequences of the Divine incarnation as it respects *the complex Person* of the Mediator. First, there is a communion between the two natures in Him which is far more intimate than that enjoyed by husband and wife, or even that which obtains between Christ and His Church: it is exceeded only by that ineffable fellowship which exists among the eternal Three. While the properties of each several nature preserve their distinctness, yet they are so united to form one Person, who may be denominated according to either nature. Sometimes the Mediator is called “man” as in Acts 17:31, etc., and at others He is designated “God,” as in Romans 9:5, etc. Thus, what cannot be said of Christ in the abstract, can be predicated of Him in the concrete—His Deity could not be tempted, nor is His humanity omnipresent: yet as a *Person* He was tempted and is omnipresent.

Second, in consequence of the two natures in His Person, Christ holds the office of Mediator. “But He is not Mediator only in His human nature, and only exercises it in that; He took upon Him, and was invested with this *office* before His assumption of human nature; and could and did exercise some parts of it without it; but there were others that required His human nature; and when, and not before it was requisite, He assumed it; and in it, as united to His Divine Person, He is God-man, is Prophet, Priest, King, Judge, Lawgiver, and Saviour; and has power over all flesh, to give eternal life to as many as the Father has given Him” (John Gill). This it is which stamped infinite worth, dignity and glory on what He did. He being both God and man in one Person, His love was the love of God (1 John 3:16), His righteousness was the righteousness of God (Phil. 3:9), His blood was the blood of God (Acts 20:28).

Thirdly, there is a communion *of operations* in both natures to the discharge of His Mediatorial office. The work performed by Christ was the work of the God-man: there was a concurrence of both natures in the performance of it. “In the work of atonement, as well as in all the other parts of His mediatorial activity, Christ acted according to both natures. They ever acted conjointly, but in their several spheres. It is important to keep in mind that they never acted apart in anything that concerned the mediatorial function. And this it is the more necessary to mention, because the notion has obtained currency in modern times that the Divine nature was for the most part in abeyance during His humiliation” (George Smeaton, 1868). “The perfect complete work of Christ in every act of His mediatory office, in all that He did as the King, Priest, and Prophet of the Church, in all that He continueth to do for us, in or by virtue of whether nature soever it be done, is not to be considered as the act of this or that nature in Him alone, but it is the act and work of *the whole person*” (John Owen).

Fourth, though the human nature of Christ, distinctively considered, is not a formal object of worship, since it is a creature, yet as taken into union with God the Son, and both natures together forming the one Person of the Mediator, Christ is to be adored and worshipped. Thus, at His birth it was said, “Let all the angels of God worship Him” (Heb. 1:6). So at His ascension He was given a name which is above every name, “that at the name *of Jesus* every knee should bow” (Phil. 2:9, 10), that is, in a way of religious adoration. Accordingly we read “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto Him that sitteth upon the throne, *and unto the Lamb* for ever and ever” (Rev. 5:13).

Fifth, in consequence of the hypostatic union, all the fullness of the Godhead dwells personally in Jesus

Christ, and in Him there is such an outshining of the perfections of Jehovah as contain the utmost manifestation of Deity which can be made either unto the angels or unto men. The “glory of God” shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6). Much may be seen of God, in creation, in providence, in grace, but in and by *Jesus Christ alone* is He fully and perfectly revealed. Therefore could He say, “He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father” (John 14:9).

The particular points which most need to be guarded in connection with this mysterious and glorious subject are: 1. The eternal Son of God united to Himself human nature. 2. Every particular man is a separate person, because he subsists of himself; but the manhood of Christ never subsisted of itself, but only in union with the second Person of the Godhead. 3. Christ, the Mediator, is but one Person; God and man being perfectly united in Him. 4. The two natures remain distinct in Him, preserving their own properties and characteristics. 5. Christ's human nature was *not* created in Heaven (as the early Plymouth Brethren taught): “The Lord from heaven” (1 Cor. 15:47) refers to His *Divine Person*, and not to the descent of His humanity. If Christ's humanity had not been formed out of Mary's substance, it had belonged to another class of creatures, and Christ had not been “the Son of man” and so could not have been our Kinsman-Redeemer. 6. The humanity of Christ was not begotten by generation according to the ordinary course of nature, but was produced by the extraordinary operation of the Holy Spirit, and therefore it is high above the compass of human reason to understand or explain. 7. As man, Christ is neither “the Son of God” (Luke 1:35) by nature or by adoption, but only *by personal union*—as the wife receives the name of her husband. 8. The humanity of Christ had to be united to His Divine Person, in order that His work should possess infinite merits. 9. Each nature acts separately, yet in conjunction with the other: as man Christ “laid down” His life, as God He “took it again” (John 10:18). 10. A *whole* Christ, God and man, is the Object of our faith, is our Saviour and Lord, and is to be worshipped and served as such.

In conclusion, let us marvel at, admire and adore this transcendent wonder and mystery. First, that a *human* nature was produced without the instrumentality of any man. Second, that that human nature was produced out of a woman without contracting the slightest taint of sin. Third, that it had no separate personality subsisting by itself. Fourth, that it should be, nevertheless, “the Son of man.” Fifth, that a Divine Person should unite unto Himself such a frail and lowly nature. Sixth, that that Divine Person was in nowise injured by such an union. Seventh, that each nature should continue to preserve its own separate properties and functions.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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August, 1935

### **Self-Crucifixion.**

“And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24). In the context, the Apostle is showing very clearly the difference between the carnal and the spiritual, by their “works” or “fruits,” and the importance of not only professing “to live in the Spirit,” but also, and chiefly, that we take care to “walk in the Spirit”; for just as a tree is known by its fruits, so a truly regenerate person is known, not by what he professes, but by his daily walk and conversation. Let, us then, consider—

I. The class of persons here mentioned—*“they that are Christ's.”* Clearly this descriptive statement does not include all men. It is not the entire human race, but a portion thereof. Who and what are they? The expression is intended to embrace the entire family of God—at least, such as are at any given time manifestively so. These are all Christ's, and that for four different reasons.

First, because they were all given to Christ by His Father. This was in eternity, before the worlds were framed. Hence Jesus says, “Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me”; and again, “Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him”; and again, “Behold I and the children that God hath given Me.” Then, as God the Father gave them to Him, they must be His; hence He calls them “My sheep.” “They that are Christ's.”

Second, because He Himself has purchased them. They are not only His by eternal and sovereign

donation; He has also bought them, redeemed them, paid the full price for them. What we purchase we are apt to consider our own property, especially if we pay a high price for it; and if any person tries to take from us anything so purchased, we style such a person a thief or a robber, and we take great pains to secure our property against the attacks of men of that description. Jesus is almighty to protect His flock, and, therefore, can confidently say, for the comfort of them all, “No one is able to pluck them out of My hands.” He has redeemed them unto God by His blood, “out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Rev. 5:9)—redeemed them “not with corruptible things, as silver and gold,” but with His own precious blood, “as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:19). “They that are Christ’s.”

Third, because the Holy Spirit has brought each of them unto Him. The Apostle is speaking not of those “that are Christ’s” according to God’s decree, who have not yet been quickened from the death of sin, but of those who have been thus quickened, for there comes a day in the earthly life of every one of these for bringing them unto Christ, according to that word of His own: “All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me”; and again, “Every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto Me.” A point of time arises when they hear the Word of God with power, and “with the Holy Spirit sent down from Heaven” (1 Peter 1:12). They are thus made to see their sinnership, to cry for mercy, to perceive the beauty that is in Christ and His salvation, and its exact suitability to their case. This brings them unto Christ, being led in spirit by the Holy Spirit, that they may find in Him “wisdom and righteousness, sanctification and redemption.” “They that are Christ’s.”

Fourth, because they have each given themselves unto Him. Thus they are Christ’s by a fourfold right, and “bound up in the bundle of life” with Him by a fourfold cord. His people are all “made willing in the day of His power.” They gladly surrender themselves unto Him, they cheerfully take Him for their Lord and Master, wish to have the honour of being His disciples, and desire to prove their love to Him by obeying Him in His ordinances, and in all the precepts of His Word. Their language, therefore is

“Chosen in Christ ere time began,  
I’d choose Thee in return”

“They that are Christ’s.” Let us consider—

II. The statement here made concerning them: “*have crucified the flesh, etc.*” Here are three separate points for our meditation. Let us inquire—

First, what are we to understand by the term “flesh”? This does not mean the body, as a pure object of God’s creation, which is “fearfully and wonderfully made,” beautifully contrived, admirably adapted to all its surroundings, and which possesses pure appetites and desires, with which it was endowed by its wise and benevolent Creator, but rather what in Scripture is styled “the carnal man.” This is “the old man,” which is “corrupt according to the deceitful lusts,” and is, therefore, to be “put off” by the believer in Christ. It is mental as well as bodily, for we read of a “carnal mind” which is “enmity against God.” “Therefore,” says the Apostle, when writing to the Corinthians, “let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit.” Both body and mind, though originally good, have, through the Fall, and also through the habit of sin, become corrupt in nature, and depraved in taste, appetite, desire.

Second, what are we to understand by “Crucifying the flesh”? This language does not signify the punishment of the poor body after the manner of the heathen, which is imitated by Papists and Ritualists. It does not mean flagellation, needless exposure to inclement weather, dwelling in a cave or cell, injuring the health by long fasts and vigils, refusing to “nourish and cherish” the body as nature requires. This is not after the commandment of God in the sacred Scriptures, but “after the commandments and doctrines of men, which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship, and humility, and neglecting of the body; not in any honour to the satisfying of the flesh” (Col. 2:22-23). No such barbarous acts as these are intended, yet the Word says the flesh is “crucified.”

Crucifixion evidently signifies *execution*, death—a shameful death, and painful death, a lingering death, an accursed death, a judicial death. And this pre-supposes *judgment and condemnation*. In every believer, then, “the body of sin” has been judged, condemned, and executed—at least the execution is in process, and will ultimately be completed. Thus “the body of sin” is said to be “destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). Of this crucifixion of the carnal nature there are two different, yet connected views or aspects. The flesh crucified—

(a) *By virtue of the believer's mystical union with Christ*. This aspect of the subject is more fully gone into in Romans 6; also in Galatians 2:20, where the Apostle says, “I am (i.e., have been) crucified with Christ.” When Jesus, as the Head and Husband, the Surety and Representative of His Church was crucified, it was for *her* sins; therefore she is said to be crucified with and in Him.

(b) *By constant soul-discipline and self-denial*. The Redeemer says that no man can possibly be His disciple who does not “deny himself, and take up his cross daily.” All that is carnal in him is to be continually denied, by the new birth he has been sanctified, and made to possess a holy nature. This is totally contrary to the “old man” of sin. Hence the inward conflict. But, for our encouragement, we are told, “Sin shall not have dominion over you.”

The Apostle does not say “the flesh” is *dead*. No; but it is “crucified,” and therefore dying—fastened, as it were, to the cross, so that it can no longer *rule* in the heart and life as it once did, though it often, alas! exerts considerable influence. But if not dead in the believer, it is doomed and already dying, and the believer is to reckon himself dead to it (Rom. 6:11). The verb here is not in the perfect tense (Greek) as in Galatians 2:20. That was done *once for all* and by Christ for all them “that are Christ's,” and the effects remain forever. Here the aorist is employed, and the meaning is that the believer has the flesh still, but in a state of crucifixion, as saith the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 9:27—“I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection.” In other places this self-crucifixion is called *mortifying* the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:12-14; Col. 3:4). That which is mortified is dead. The Christian life is one of continued mortification as regards the old and corrupt nature; and the more we die to sin, the more we live to God.

Third, *what are we to understand by the “affections and lusts”*? Not that we are to mortify and be dead to every natural feeling. Far from it. The pure natural affections, desires, feelings, inclinations, appetites, and sympathies were bestowed by a benevolent Creator on purpose to be properly and moderately gratified. But “the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats,

which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth. For every creature of God is good, and nothing to be refused, if it be received with thanksgiving: for it is sanctified by the Word of God and prayer” (1 Tim. 4:1, 3-5). How strikingly does this language foretell and reprove the monkery and undue asceticism of apostates!

The word “affections” is more exactly rendered “passions” in the margin, for it signifies, not pure natural affections, but rather raging, boisterous, vile, sudden passions. Originally the word signifies “sufferings,” and truly those who are under the influence of ungoverned, wicked passions, are sufferers. What sufferings do these indulgences produce, not only in the person himself, but in all connected socially with him! And by the indulgence of these furious passions, the seeds are sown of an eternal harvest of pain. The same word is, in Romans 7:5, translated “motions”—“when we were in the flesh (i.e., in an unregenerate condition) the *motions* of sins, which were by the law, did work in our members to bring forth fruit unto death”; and a cognate word is rendered “affections” in the bad sense, in Romans 1:26—“God gave them up unto vile affections.” By the other term “lusts,” we understand *desires* that are wicked, base, carnal. The Greek signifies what the mind is *set upon*—that which is quietly indulged in the mind—all those inclinations, propensities, and inward feelings that are depraved and corrupt.

Now “they that are Christ's” have all these evil passions and desires like other people, but with this great difference: they have them in a state of crucifixion, mortification, abeyance. They are not delivered entirely from them yet, though they shall be.

“When death, which puts an end to life,  
Shall put an end to sin.”

But even now they are not so under the dominion of the carnal nature as they once were. Sin does not *reign* in their heart and life as it once did, though frequently, through infirmity, and sometimes through lack of watchfulness, it exercises sufficient influence to cause much anxiety, doubt, and sorrow of heart. But the time is hastening on when they shall be “delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.” Is this your hope? Is sin *a burden* to you? Then you may look forward with the feelings of the poet, when he sang—

“O glorious hour! O blest Abode!  
I shall be near and like my God!  
Nor flesh nor sense shall e'er control  
The sacred pleasures of my soul.”

A.E. Realff, 1887.

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### **Sanctified Affliction and Pride Contrasted.**

“In those days Hezekiah was sick to the death, and prayed unto the LORD: and He spake unto him, and He gave him a sign. But Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 32:24, 25). In these two verses we see the same individual under widely different circumstances—sickness and health, adversity and prosperity. And looking into this part of the Divine Word, as in a mirror, we may surely see ourselves. “Consider the work of God: for who can make that straight, which He hath made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after Him” (Eccl. 7:13, 14).

A full account of the circumstances in Hezekiah's experience, to which our text refers, will be found in 2 Kings 20, and a fuller still in Isaiah 38 and 39. It is thought that at that time he was about thirty-nine or forty years of age, and that the sickness and deliverance took place at the very time when Sennacherib, by Rabshakeh, was blaspheming Jehovah, and threatening the destruction of Jerusalem (compare Isa. 38:6 with 37:35). Thus the afflicted king had trouble upon trouble, which God so often mysteriously permits—so much so that it has become a common adage that “misfortunes never come singly.” To hear the blatant blasphemies of Rabshakeh—to be reviled by him in the sight and hearing of the populace, and to read his insolent and threatening letter—surely these were troubles indeed. But to be presently confined to his bed with a mortal disease, and to be afflicted with a most painful carbuncle, or inflamed ulcer—this was “sorrow upon sorrow.”

Yet it is refreshing to discover the fact that these accumulated sorrows do not work repining, rebellion, or despair in the heart of the afflicted monarch, but lead to self-examination, tenderness of heart, and earnest supplication. Having the testimony, through grace, of “a conscience void of offence both toward God and toward men,” i.e., as regards outward sin, he is comforted by the assurance that his afflictions have not been brought upon him by his own misconduct, but have come in the order of God's inscrutable providence, therefore he feels that he can “commit his way unto the Lord.” Yet he “weeps sore”—not from a sense of unpardoned sin, for he acknowledges that God has cast all his sins behind His back, but because he yearns for life, as is natural. This might be from a longing hope, like that of Simeon, to see the Shiloah, or at least to be progenitor of Messiah (Isa. 38:11), for as yet he appears to be childless (39:7). Or his desire might be simply not to be “cut off” in the prime of his life, and before he had finished his projected reforms in the kingdom. So it would seem David felt when he wrote Psalm 39—”O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.”

God hears his prayer and see his tears. The Prophet Isaiah, who had but just announced the mortal nature of the disease, is commissioned to return, and declare that his life shall be lengthened fifteen years, and that, on the third day, he should be able to go to the temple (2 Kings 20:5). He is instructed to apply a very simple remedy, but God's blessing accompanies it. Thus the plaister of figs proves more efficacious, under the Divine direction and blessing, than all the appliances of the most clever physicians could possibly be, without that direction and blessing. Nor is this all. A remarkable sign, in answer to his request, is granted. This would tend greatly to raise his spirits and confirm his faith, and so conduce to his more rapid recovery. That the bringing back of the shadow on the sun-dial was a miracle is very plain; but how it was wrought is not so plain. Upon recovery, he is inspired to write a beautiful Psalm, which probably was set to music, and sung in the temple as a thanksgiving ode or “Te-Deum.”

But alas! how soon a change comes over him! “Lord, what is man?” Truly, “the best of men are but men at the best.” How vastly different do we find even good and gracious men under different circumstances! King Hezekiah was in a far better and safer state of mind when taunted by the cruel words of Sennacherib, the city being besieged and threatened by his troops, and when tossed upon a bed of pain, afflicted with an incurable disease, than when visited and congratulated by the heathen emissaries of the king of Babylon. They came, we are told, “To inquire of the wonder that was done in the land” (2 Chron. 32:31). Their bringing “letters and a present” was perhaps to persuade Hezekiah to form an alliance with their king against the Assyrians. The name *Merodach* signifies “a warlike god,” similar to the Roman “Mars”: and *Baladan* means “Bel is his lord.” We read that “Hezekiah was glad at them,” and showed them all his treasures. The reason is given in our text—”his heart was lifted up”; and the cause is stated in verse 31—”God left him, to try him, that he might know all that was in his heart.” This discipline was necessary; the Lord saw that. He was, no doubt, pleased in his sickness not to be conscience-accused, because of any outward delinquency; and he had “walked in truth, and with a perfect heart,” i.e., in the sense of *sincerity*. But it was necessary he should “know *all* that was in his heart”—worldly mindedness, love of earthly treasures, pride, and forgetfulness of God. What believer has not these corruptions, and a thousand others, to lament? And so it pleased God to withdraw from Hezekiah for a time His supporting grace, as in the case of Peter—not that he might fall into sin, although, as a necessary consequence, he did so; but to teach him a valuable and life-long lesson.

Oh, how deceitful is the heart, even in a child of grace, who has been Divinely renewed by the Spirit! Here was a man but just recovered from a most dangerous sickness, having been by that disease sorely tried and exercised in soul, and by it, through grace, brought very near to God, now “lifted up” with carnal pride. Can this indeed be the same man that has been miraculously and speedily healed, who has received a grant of fifteen years of added life from the mouth of the Almighty, confirmed by another miracle? Can this be he who penned by Divine inspiration that noble Psalm, and who has so recently been singing His thanksgivings in the temple? What beautiful, spiritual utterances are discoverable in this “writing”? Is this the man who said, “We will sing my songs to the stringed instruments all the days of our life in the house of the LORD”? (Isa. 38:20). It seems quite incredible; and yet, believers, does it not exactly tally with our own experience? Such heavenly raptures on the Sabbath; such carnality of heart all the week; one hour praying, and trusting, and loving; and the next rebelling against God, and doubting His promises. Alas! “The heart *is* deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?” (Jer. 17:9). How often are we obliged to say, with Paul, “When I would do good, evil is present with me”! (Rom. 7:21). This feeling caused Erskine to pen these strange lines—

“To good and evil equal bent,  
I'm both a devil and a saint.”

Hezekiah is flattered and “puffed up” in mind by the visit and the present and congratulations of the ambassadors, who had “come from a far country, even from Babylon” (2 Kings 20:14); and, in the pride of his heart, showed them all his “precious things.” The man who was so strong in spirit when weak in body, now that his body is strong again, is deplorably weak in spirit. He proudly and vainly talks to these idolaters about his earthly possessions, but says not one word about his soul-experiences under sickness, the wonderful mercy of God which he had experienced in answer to prayer, and the miracle that had been wrought to establish his faith. Oh, what a grand opportunity would this have been to magnify and praise the true God in the hearing of idolaters! There was no other god who could answer prayer, and work in this marvelous manner. Here is a splendid opportunity utterly lost—an opportunity which, judging by his recent experience and language, we should have thought Hezekiah just the man to embrace. What folly may a gracious person be guilty of—aye, terrible sin—if God leaves him a prey to the corruptions of his own heart.

Dear fellow-believers, what need have we to “watch and pray, lest we enter into temptation; for the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”! (Matt. 26:41). Verily, “he that trusteth in his own heart is a fool”; and, as one has well observed, “he that trusts in his grace is no better.” Our trust must not be in ourselves, nor even in grace already received, but solely in the Lord of all grace. “Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall.” Lord, help us continually to cry, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. 119:117).

But now observe, because of this lifting up of Hezekiah's heart, “therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem” (2 Chron. 32:25). Not eternal wrath. Oh, no; but temporal punishment. He must be chastened for this sin (Isa. 39:3-7). Oh, what a cutting revelation was this! And yet how remarkably it was suited to the nature of his sin! Had Hezekiah, in the vanity of his heart, showed the Babylonian ambassadors the whole of the precious things that were in his house? The days should come

when all the treasures of the kings of Judah should be carried to Babylon—yea, even the seed royal. Yet, although poor Hezekiah offended through the pride of his natural heart, we see he was not destitute of Divine grace. Oh, what a mercy that the new nature is indestructible! It is nothing less than “eternal life”; and when the Holy Spirit is pleased to renew a soul, that soul becomes a “partaker of the Divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4). Like David, when the Prophet Nathan said, “Thou art the man,” Hezekiah is melted directly by the solemn words of the Heaven-sent Isaiah; and like Peter, he is at once humbled in spirit. Mark his submissive language, “Good is the word of the Lord which thou hast spoken,” (2 Kings 20:19). He magnifies the mercy and longsuffering of God towards himself, and acquiesces in the threatened judgment as “good.”

“Good when He gives—supremely good—  
No less when He denies.”

So holy Job: “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away,” etc. So the Shunammite, “It is well.” So Eli, “It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth Him good.” Here, then, is the triumph, after all, of faith over sense; of the spirit over the flesh.

But oh, Christless sinner, if God thus judges His own believing and worshipping people, do you think He will spare the wicked? If He thus terribly shows His displeasure on account of one sin in a child of grace, can you suppose that He will wink at all your unpardoned iniquities? Believe me, *He cannot—He will not.* He bears long with you; but, by and by, He will certainly whet His “glittering sword,” and then it will be awful work indeed! When He arises “to shake terribly the earth,” how will you stand? Hear what He says to you: “Can thine heart endure, or can thine hands be strong, in the days that I shall deal with thee? I the LORD have spoken it, *and will do it*” (Ezek. 22:14). “For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the Gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?” (1 Peter 4:17-18). Ah! where indeed? If God is thus displeased on account of one sin in the heart of a “vessel of mercy,” what must be His feelings towards the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction?” The subject is awful to contemplate, beyond words to describe or even fancy to paint. “The LORD *trieth* the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence His soul *hateth*. Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup” (Psa. 11:5, 6). Oh, that you might “flee from the wrath to come!”

“Ye sinners, seek His grace  
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;  
Fly to the shelter of His cross,  
And find salvation there.”

I know it is not in your power, by the exercise of your own will, to do this, but may it please God to speak with power to your soul through these utterances of His Word. We know not but He may have purposes of grace even unto some of you, and if so, you who are present “not a people” manifestively, shall become “the people of God,” through His sovereign and efficacious call, which you shall obey; and then you will blessedly find that Jesus “became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him” (Heb.

5:9).—(A.E. Realff, 1887).

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### **Grievances.**

Amongst the various characters that are ever moving up and down in this busy world, we sometimes encounter that peculiar and by no means pleasant one which we may call *a man with a grievance*. Even amongst your own relations and friends you may find him; for he is usually not very far to seek. Most of us know some querulous, discontented individual who is the worst used person in the world, who is always being injured, and whose general conversation is a tissue of complaints against everybody—but himself.

Most of the complaints are purely imaginary, the mere suspicions of a soured mind, the workings of a proud unhumiliated heart, the heavings of a restless, fretful spirit. But it sometimes happens that this not very amiable person has a *real* ground of complaint—that some injury, not perhaps a great, but a substantial wrong, has been done him. Now he is a man with a grievance, a real, well-grounded grievance. And now he is happy. He is like a married woman who, after a long series of disappointments, at last gives birth to a living child. She has now something to nurse, to look at, to press to her bosom, to show to her husband and friends. So our discontented friend has now a living grievance to nurse, to press to his bosom, to feed, and to show about. An imaginary wrong is like a still-born child: it cannot be nursed or shown about. Nobody will take it up; and though the mother pine over it, it must be put out of sight, buried and forgotten. But the living child may prove to the mother a worse sorrow than all her previous disappointments. Better have no child, than an untoward one; better be ever barren, than bare a son to his mother's grief and bitterness (Prov. 17:25).

I have put an extreme case to show the point more clearly and vividly; but many minor instances will recur to the minds of most. Assume, then, that our friend has a real substantial grievance, and assume that, with all his wretched temper and disposition, he does possess the life of God in his soul. Now, what shall he do with his grievance? He cannot bury it, for it is alive; and he has not sufficient grace to at once crucify it. He is determined, therefore, to nurse it, but if he nurse it, it must be at the expense of the life of God in his soul, for a more untoward brat mother never bore, one who, when strong enough, will not scruple to rob her of everything she possesses, and of her own life too, unless it be miraculously preserved.

Christian reader, have you never had a grievance—a real, substantial grievance? Were you never wronged by some professor in pocket or reputation? Were you never wounded in the house of your friends? Has no Christian brother ever treated you unjustly or unkindly? Has your minister, or the deacons, or some in the church, or the church itself, done what you believed to be a real, substantial wrong? and they will neither admit it, confess it, nor repair it. Well, now you have a grievance: a fair, legitimate, honest grievance. You are not naturally of such a temper and disposition as has been described, and yet you have solid ground of complaint. Now what do you do with your grievance? Do you nurse it? Do you brood over it? Do you press it close to your bosom to keep it warm? Do you listen to its cries and complaints, and do you continually feed it that it may not die away, but thrive and grow, and get stronger and stronger? Be honest with yourself, and see how matters really stand between the Lord and your soul. Do you not find that this overgrown child which you so carefully nurse, which is scarcely ever out of your arms and never out of your mind, which you show about so much to all your friends and visitors, *is secretly draining away the life of your soul*. Where is your patience, your forbearance, your broken contrite heart, your submission to the will of God, your love to the brethren, your meekness and quietness, your forgiving spirit, your godly fear of displeasing the Lord by hating your brother, your obedience to Gospel precepts?

You have been wronged, grievously wronged, cruelly and unjustly treated. Well, all the more reason why you should *show your Christian spirit* by forgiving those who have wronged you. Will you never forgive? Will you go down to the grave in your unforgiving spirit? Will you nurse your grievance till, like a spoiled child, it becomes your master, and ends in robbing you of all you possess worth having? Do you not see how lean you are getting, wasting away like a youth in consumption? Do not you find how barren your soul is, what little access you have to God in prayer, what little enjoyment of His presence and smiles of His face?

Do you not feel how dark your mind is, and how long it is since you had a visit from Jesus? But why all this darkness, barrenness, and death? It there not a cause? Do not these increase the more you brood over your wrongs? And should not this lead you to fear lest you be holding an enemy to God to your bosom? In nursing your grievance, could you see the real state of the case, you would find that you are nursing *enmity, pride and self-righteousness*; that you are walking contrary to the spirit and the precepts of the Gospel; that you are acting against the mind and example of Christ, who forgave his murderers; and yet you who call yourself a Christian, cannot forgive your brother! “Yes, but he has treated me so unkindly, so cruelly, so unjustly.” All the more reason why you should forgive him. “But he has acted so inconsistently.” Well, reprove him for it; but let not *his sin* be an occasion for *you* to sin too. I dare say you think you have more grace than he, for you are sure *you* would not have treated him as he has treated you. Then show the superiority of your grace by freely forgiving him, if you believe him to be a brother. But

whether you have sufficient grace for this or not, take this friendly piece of advice, if you can—*do not nurse your grievance*; for depend upon it, you can only do so, to the eventual grief of your own soul, to the inflicting upon yourself of a deeper wrong than that from which you are suffering, and an injury worse than any that your worst enemy could inflict upon you.—From “The Gospel Standard,” 1864.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **Union and Communion.**

#### *3. Mystical.*

In the introductory article we pointed out that “There are three principal unions revealed in the Scriptures which are the chief mysteries and form the foundation of our most holy faith. First, the union of three Divine Persons in one Godhead: having distinct personalities, being co-eternal and co-glorious, yet constituting one Jehovah. Second, the union of the Divine and human natures in one Person, Jesus Christ, Immanuel, being God and man. Third, the union of the Church to Christ: He being the Head, they the members, constituting one mystical body. Though we cannot form any exact idea of any of these unions in our imaginations, because the depth of such mysteries is beyond our comprehension, yet it is our bounden duty to believe them all because they are clearly revealed in Scripture, and are the necessary foundation for other parts of Christian doctrine. Hence it is our holy privilege to prayerfully study the same, looking unto the Holy Spirit to graciously enlighten us thereon.”

Having shown in the previous articles—very stumblingly and inadequately—how that a plurality of Persons in the Godhead made possible the Mediatorial union, we are now ready to consider how the Son of God taking upon Himself our nature made possible the union of the Church to Him. While orthodox theologians have written clearly upon the Divine union which exists between the three Persons in the Godhead, and while they have treated helpfully the nature of the Mediatorial union, the same can hardly be said of their discussion of the union which exists between God's elect and their glorious Head. Though not a little has been written thereon, most men have generalized far too much, failing to distinguish between

the various aspects of that oneness which exists between Christ and His people. Not a few have jumbled together what needs to be considered apart, if a clear view is to be obtained thereof.

It is not to be expected that Arminians should have any clear grasp of the exceedingly precious subject which is now to engage our attention. Making man, rather than God, the centre of their system, they necessarily begin at the wrong place. They make the union of the believer with Christ to commence at his conversion, when faith lays hold of and makes Him ours. But this is to start at the middle, instead of at the beginning. They fail to recognize that there must be a *vital* union before there can be a fiducial one, that the soul must first be made alive spiritually before it is capacitated to trust savingly in Christ. One who is dead in trespasses and sins has no more ability to perform spiritual acts—and appropriating the Lord Jesus as our own *is* a spiritual act—than a corpse in the grave is qualified to perform physical acts. Life itself must be present before there can be any evidence and exercises of it.

Calvinists do not fall into the error just pointed out above. They perceive that the sinner must first be quickened before he can savingly believe the Gospel. They insist that the Holy Spirit must unite the soul vitally to Christ ere there can be any drawing from the fullness which is in Christ. We must be livingly united to Him before any of His benefits become ours. I must be a son before I can be an heir. So far so good. But at this point not a few modern Calvinists fail to trace the effect back to its proper source. It is not sufficient to point out that faith necessarily presupposes spiritual life, for that spiritual life itself presupposes something else prior to the communication of it. The Holy Spirit does not regenerate all. *Who* are the ones He brings from death unto life? Galatians 4:6 tells us, “Because ye are *sons*, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts.” There is, then, a relation to God *prior to* regeneration.

Now a relation to God previous to regeneration necessarily presupposes *a relation to Christ* previous to regeneration, for we have no spiritual relation to God Himself apart from the Mediator. The elect are God's “sons” because united to His Son: “Behold I and the children which God hath given Me” (Heb. 2:13) is His own language. Before He came into this world it was said, “Thou shalt call His name JESUS: for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21)—those who were to be saved by Him were “His people” *before* He became incarnate. They were one with Him by an indissoluble bond long ere the Lord of glory took upon Himself human nature. There was a mystical and eternal union subsisting between Christ and the Church, which formed the basis of that vital union which is effected by the Holy Spirit during a time state, the latter *making manifest* the former, the former being the ground upon which the latter is effected.

Not a few of the older Calvinists firmly adhered to this foundation truth of the mystical union subsisting between Christ and His Church, but it is to be regretted that they did not define more definitely the *real nature* of that mystical union, and distinguish between the different elements which composed it, or rather, the various aspects which it comprises. Some have narrowed it down to a mere legal or federal union, failing to see that this also presupposed a prior relationship. Some have confined the oneness between Christ and His people to that of the Surety and those whom He represented. Others have spoken of the *covenant-union* between Christ and His Church, without stating in detail *of what* that covenant-union consists. Still others, employed the expression “election-union,” which though coming nearer to the mark, still leaves the subject clouded in a certain vagueness.

The one writer who appears to have been blest with a clearer insight into this great mystery than most of his fellows was John Gill—to whom we are indebted for some of the leading thoughts in what follows—though he, in turn, received help, no doubt, from the writings of James Hussey, the high Calvinist of the seventeenth century. Those men rightly traced back the covenant and federal union which the Church has with its Head to the eternal *love* of the Triune God, which, operating by His everlasting decree, gave them *an election-union* with Christ. It needs to be pointed out that the eternal decree of Jehovah gave Christ—as the God-man Mediator—a real subsistence before Him before the foundation of the world, and a real subsistence unto the elect in Him, so that “*before* the mountains were settled . . . while as yet He had not made the earth,” He could say “My delights were with the sons of men” (Prov. 8:25, 26, 31).

The technical name by which the oneness between Christ and His people is designated by theologians is “mystical union.” This term has been employed—for want of a better—not because the union is vague or unreal, but because it far transcends all earthly analogies in its intimacy of fellowship and reciprocal partnership, both in the very nature of it, the power of its influence, and the excellency of its consequence. “On the one hand, this union does not involve any mysterious *confusion* of the Person of Christ with the persons of His people, and, on the other hand, it is not such a *mere association* of separate persons as exists in human societies” (A.A. Hodge). It is a relation far more intimate than any which may be formed by any external bonds. This union is presented to us in Scripture as a matter of fact, without any explanation, to be credited on the ground of Divine testimony.

But though the union between Christ and His Church far transcends all natural analogies, the Scriptures set forth its variety and fullness, element by element, by means of several partial analogies. Because this union is so high and and mysterious, it has pleased God to make use of various resemblances for the describing of it, that He might thereby make it more credible and intelligible to us. It is observable that the Holy Spirit has referred to various unions, natural, relative, and artificial, that He might by all of them more clearly and distinctly shadow out the grand union betwixt Christ and His saints. Yet let it be pointed out that useful as are these particular analogies as to the end designed, yet they all come short of the mystical union which they refer to. They may indeed illustrate it—so far as temporal and natural things can—but they cannot reach or equal it.

The first of these typical resemblances which may be mentioned is that of husband and wife. Upon the conjugal relation there is a very close and intimate conjunction. Now Christ and His people stand in this conjugal relation each to the other. He is their “Husband” (Isa. 54:5), they are His “Wife” (Rev. 19:7). They are “espoused” to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2), “married” to Christ (Rom. 7:4), “betrothed” to Him “for ever” (Hosea 2:19); their name is “Hephzibah” (“My delight is in her”) and “Beulah”—“Married” (Isa. 62:4). This marriage-union Paul applies to Christ and believers: “So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church: for we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones” (Eph. 5:28-30), to which the Apostle adds, “This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church” (v. 32)—I am using this union between husband and wife to point to that higher and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people: the husband and the wife are “one”; and Christ and the Church are so much more.

The second of these natural analogies is found in the physical head and members. In the human body there is a close conjunction between these two, for they are joined the one to the other, and together form one and the same organism. Thus it is with Christ and believers in the body mystical, to which the Holy Spirit has repeatedly applied the terms pertaining to this physical adumbration: Christ is the Head, they are the several members belonging to that Head. Of Christ it is said, God “gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church, which is His body” (Eph. 1:22, 23), “and He is the Head of the Body, the Church” (Col. 1:18). Of the members it is said, “Now ye are the Body of Christ, and members in particular” (1 Cor. 12:27), and “So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another” (Rom. 12:5). As truly and as intimately as the head and members of the physical body are united, so truly and intimately are Christ and believers united also.

The third of these earthly adumbrations is found in that of the root and the branches growing out of the same. There is not only a connection between them, but a vital oneness, otherwise how should the one convey life, sap, growth to the other? So it is with Christ and His people: He is the Root, they are the tendrils issuing therefrom. “I am the vine, ye are the branches” (John 15:5). To this analogy the Holy Spirit frequently makes reference: “We have been *planted together* in the likeness of His death” (Rom. 6:5); “If the Root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, wert grafted in among them, and with them partakest of the root and fatness of the olive tree” (Rom. 11:16, 17); “Rooted and built up in Him” (Col. 2:7). Thus there is a blessed resemblance between Christ and His Church and the root and its branches, both in point of union and of influence: the root is united to the branches and they to it; the root conveys life, nourishment and fruitfulness to the branches; so does Christ to believers.

Another resemblance is found in the foundation and the building. Here again is union, for in a building all the stones and timbers are joined and fastened together upon the foundation, making but one entire structure. So it is with believers and Christ. This figure is also used in Scripture again and again. The Lord Himself likened the one who heard and obeyed His sayings to “a wise man, which built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24). The Apostle Paul reminded the saints, “Ye are God's building” and added, “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:9, 11); and again they are said to be “built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone” (Eph. 2:20). As a man builds upon the foundation, laying the weight of the whole building upon it, so the faith and confidence of the Christian is built upon that “sure Foundation which God has laid in Zion” (Isa. 28:16).

Now as there is nothing in this natural world which more sweetly and securely knits souls together than *love*, so the cementing bond which unites Christ and the Church must be traced back to the love of God. If love can be so effectual among men in binding one heart to another, how infinitely more powerful must love in the heart of God attract and unite the objects of it to Himself, giving them a nearness to Him such as finite minds are quite incapable of fully comprehending. *This* is the bond of union of saints one to another, for their hearts are “knit together in love” (Col. 2:2), and therefore is love called “the bond of perfectness” (Col. 3:14). *Love*, then, the everlasting love of the Father, Son, and Spirit, is the *origin* of the Church's union with Christ. “This is that cement which will never loosen, that union-knot which can never

be untied, that bond which can never be dissolved, from whence there can be no separation” (John Gill).

Now *election* was the first and fundamental act of God's love toward His people, giving them a subsistence in Christ from everlasting, “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:4). God does not love His people because He elected them, rather did He elect them because He had set His heart upon them. The Divine order is plainly intimated in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “Brethren *beloved* of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen* you to salvation.” The same precious truth is brought out again in Ephesians 1: “*In love* having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (vv. 4, 5). This was the supreme act and instance of everlasting love, by which the elect were considered in Christ and one with Him, He being chosen as the Head, they as His members—obviously we could not be *in* Christ without being one *with* Him.

“He is the Head of the body, the Church: who is the Beginning, the Firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence” (Col. 1:18). Yes, *Christ* was “the beginning” even in connection with election: there too He had “the preeminence.”

“Be Thou My first elect He said,  
Then chose the Church in Christ its Head.”

Christ was not chosen for the Church, but the Church for Him. There was an *order* in God's counsels, as there is in all His works; and *Christ* occupies the first place therein. The ever-blessed and all-sufficient God was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone for ever in His own infinite immensity. The eternal Father therefore ordained that His co-essential Son should take unto Himself a created nature, uniting the man Christ Jesus into indissoluble union to His Divine Person. God fixed upon the Person of Christ, as God-man, as the one great and everlasting object of His love, delight and complacency. He was as God-man “set up from everlasting,” being possessed by Jehovah as “the Beginning of His way” (Prov. 8:22, 23).

Next, God was pleased to decree that an elect number of Adam's race should be united to Christ and be for His glory. As the man Christ Jesus was Jehovah's “Elect” in whom His soul “delighteth” (Isa. 42:1), and as He was (by infinite grace) taken to be Jehovah's “Fellow” (Zech. 13:7), so those who were elected in Christ became His “delight” (Prov. 8:31) and were to be *His* “fellows” (Psa. 45:7), to be everlastingly glorified in and with Him. Though in the order of time Christ and His Church were elected together, to form one complete mystical Body, yet in the order of God's counsels Christ was elected first, and then His people were chosen in Him. “Christ was *the Head* of election, and of the elect of God; and so in order of nature elected first, though in order of time we were elected with Him. In the womb of election, He, the Head, came out first, and then we the members. He is therefore said *in predestination* to be the Firstborn of all His brethren—see Romans 8:29” (Thomas Goodwin). This is a profound depth, yet a most important truth, and needing further amplification.

“God in the act of election looked not at us apart and singly as in ourselves, so as by one act to choose us, and by another act to give us to Christ. But as of the soul it is by one and the same act of God's both

created and infused into the body, as so subsists not one moment apart; likewise God in the act of choosing us gave us to Christ, and in giving us to Christ He chose us. And thus, He never considering us apart, but as members of Christ and given to Him in the very act of choosing, hence our very choice itself is said to be 'in Him.' And so, on the other side, in the first view and purpose God took up concerning Christ, and in electing Him, He looked not at Him apart as a single Person in Himself, but as a Head to us His body, chosen in Him and with Him. So it is not that Jesus Christ was chosen by one act to be man, and then to be a Common Person by another; but at the very *same instant* that He was chosen the one, He was chosen the other, under that very consideration to be a Common Person.

“It was in this as in the creation of Adam, Christ's shadow; who when he was first made, was not made as a single man, he was made 'a living soul' (1 Cor. 15:45). What is that? To be a *public* person, to convey life to others as well as to have life personally in himself. That is the meaning, as appears by the following words, 'The last Adam,' that is, Christ 'was made a quickening spirit,' that is, not for Himself, but to others. So that the very first view that God in election took of Christ, was not of Him only as a single Person considered, but as a Common Person. In a word, as in the womb head and members are not conceived apart, *but together*, as having relation each to other, so were we in Christ, as making up one mystical body unto God, formed together in that eternal womb of election. So that God's choice did completely terminate itself on Him and us; us with Him, and yet us in Him; He having the priority to be constituted a Common Person and root to us” (Thomas Goodwin).

Now God's eternal decree gave His elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being “loved” (Jer. 31:3) and of receiving a grant of grace: “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9)— note well, it was not simply that God purposed to give His chosen people grace, but that grace “*was* given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.” If, then, grace was actually “given us in Christ” ere time commenced, then we must have a real subsistence in Him before God from everlasting. This too, is above our powers to fully comprehend, yet is it a truth to be held fast on the ground of the Divine testimony. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated *in the Divine mind* as real entities, in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond the consideration of the Fall.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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### Crucified with Christ

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). That all mankind are in the same condition as the Apostle, in the days of his unregeneracy, was, is, a melancholy fact, of which every renewed soul is by sad consciousness too sensible. Born in the sinful likeness of fallen Adam, they are all partakers of the curse under which he brought himself and all his posterity by his transgression, namely, “thou shalt surely die.” But to every contrite soul awakened to its state of loss and ruin, the Gospel of the grace of God proclaims salvation from the curse, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.

When this saving truth is brought home with power to the heart of a child of God, through the almighty working of the eternal Spirit, his understanding is enlightened to see himself in the position of the regenerated Apostle in the language of our text, in which is to be observed he speaks of the change of which he had been the subject. He had been “dead in trespasses and sins,” but now he was dead to sin and alive unto God. Observe also with what energy he speaks of two persons—Christ and *me*—and with what determination he clings to Christ, and claims the merits of His death, the privileges of His life.

The first branch of the text is “I am crucified with Christ.” He claims to have fully paid the penalty of sin when Christ died, from which we gather: 1. That Christ, on the cross, was not a private, but a public Person, representing all His people; so that when He died and suffered, we died and suffered in Him. As

the first Adam did not sin only for himself, but for all his natural seed that should come of him, by ordinary generation, so the last Adam did not die for Himself at all, but for all His seed. 2. There is a real, spiritual, and indissoluble union between Christ and all His people that believe in Him, insomuch that His being crucified is the same as if they had been crucified in their person.

The second branch of the text is, “Nevertheless, I live.” It is not an annihilation of my being, but a renovation and reformation of my former being. Though I be crucified and dead, yet I live a new life. I am not what I was, nor whose I was, nor where I was. I am not what I was: I am not Saul the persecutor, but Paul the believer, the preacher. I am not whose I was: I was Satan's, but now I am Christ's. I am not where I was: I am living in another world, breathing another air—I live.

The third branch is, “Yet not I.” “Not I.” Who then? Why, what solemn contradictions are here! “I am crucified and dead.” Then there is an end, for death is the end of all. Nay, but hear him again: “Nevertheless I live.” Why, this is a short death that is so soon restored to life! Or is he at one and the same time both dead and alive? Yes, Paul is dead, and Paul lives. “I live.” It is not “I was crucified and dead,” but, “I am crucified with Christ.” “I am dead, and yet I am living,” and “yet not I.” Here is another contradiction or paradox—“Not of myself but by the life of Another.” No soul can animate this body but my own; yet neither soul nor body can live but by God. Thus does he annihilate himself, that he may magnify his Master, and that Christ may be *all in all*.

The fourth branch of the text is, “Christ liveth in me.” Christ is the Root and Fountain of all spiritual life, having it so superabundant in Himself that He can convey it to all His members. Christ is said to live in the believer by virtue of the spiritual union, whereby He and they are one spirit. The soul doth not more properly live in the body than He doth quicken the soul, and will quicken the body. Christ is the Sun of Righteousness to the soul. His absence leaves us dead; His presence revives us; and happy he that can say, “Christ liveth in me.”

The fifth branch is, “The life that I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God.” “I live, and live in the flesh.” By “flesh” he means not the corruption of nature, for to that he was dead when “crucified with Christ,” but the mortal body. It is one thing to live in the flesh, another to live *to* the flesh or after the flesh. Paul did not lead such a life as he did before, for that was to the flesh. His life now is but *in* the flesh. In the former state he was dead while he lived, “but now I am alive,” says he. What a mercy were it if all who read this could say, they *live* before they go hence, and cease living.

But what sort of a life is it? “I live,” says he, “by the faith of the Son of God.” Here is life—“I live.” He was very sure of it, for he had said it before—“I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me”; and here again, “I live.” Well, here is the means of this life: “I live by faith”—“by the faith of the Son of God.” We live primarily and properly by Christ, as the body by the soul; but mediately and instrumentally by faith, as by the spirits which are the bonds of soul and body. “He that hath the Son hath life”; he that hath faith hath the Son.

Here further is the designation given to this faith. It is called “faith of the Son of God,” because, first, He is the Revealer of it. Neither nature nor law could open the door of faith. “Grace and truth came by Jesus

Christ” (John 1:17). “No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him” (v. 18). Secondly, He is the Approver and Favourer of faith. There is nothing more acceptable to Him. When He finds it strong in man or woman, He is ready to say, “O man, O woman, great is thy faith. Be it to thee even as thou wilt!” Thirdly, He is the Author of faith. He is both the Seeker and the Giver of it. Faith is the gift of God; and He that calls us to believe, He only works it in us. Fourthly, he is the Increaser of it, therefore the disciples pray, “Lord, increase our faith”—He that gives it, gives the increase of it. Fifthly, He is the “Finisher of our faith”—both the Author and Finisher (Heb. 12:2). He that begins this good work, He perfects the work of faith with power. Sixthly, He is the Object of faith. Faith desires to know nothing but “Christ and Him crucified.” On these accounts it may be called, “the faith of the Son of God,” where again you have the Object of faith described from His glorious Person. He is the Son of God, a Person of quality, and of such quality as to be equal with God the Father, “higher than the highest, without beginning and without end, the Faithful Witness, the Prince of the kings of the earth, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, which was, and which is, and which is to come, the Almighty, He who hath on His vesture and on His thigh this name written, KING of kings and LORD of lords.”

And then the Object of faith is described from His works—“He loved me and gave Himself for me,” which is the sixth branch of the text. The Apostle had, in the preceding words, challenged Christ for his own: “I am crucified with Christ, and I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” He engrosses Him to himself, as if He were his own, and no man's else. “And the life I live I live is by the faith of the Son of God, who is likewise mine, for He loved me, and gave Himself for me.” It is the noble art of faith to challenge Christ for his own, and that with an “I” and “me,” as if none else were concerned but itself; and hence this whole verse is made up of so many “I's” and “me's.” Oh glorious Lover! the Son of God! Oh gracious act! “He loved” and Oh strange object whom He loved—me—unlovely me! But how did He manifest His love? Even by His gift—He gave. What did He give? Himself. For whom? For me, unworthy me! Every word hath weight, and every act of faith hath a “me” in the bosom of it—Christ liveth in me; He loved me; and gave Himself for me.—An ancient Author, unknown.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1935

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *3. Mystical.*

The everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the Church's union to Christ, election being the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members, that election giving them a subsistence in their Head: "According as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world" (Eph. 1:4). In election God made it manifest that He was pleased to desire *creature* fellowship and society, instead of dwelling alone forever in His own infinite self-sufficiency. First, He ordained that His beloved Son should take manhood into union with His own Person, and that as God-man He should be the Head of a people given to Him for His glory. This *order* in the Divine counsels is marvelously adumbrated in the physical realm: the head and members of the human body are conceived *together* in the womb, as Christ and the members of His Church were chosen to form one Body; yet as the head comes out *first*, so Christ was given the pre-eminence from the womb of God's decrees.

However difficult it be for us to grasp, it is important we should recognise that God's eternal decree gave the elect a super-creation subsistence before Him, so that they were capable of being loved and of receiving a grant of grace. In other words, in God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated by Him in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were "Blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" and "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:3, 6). It is of great moment that the Church should thus be first considered by us, that we never lose sight of the *original* dignity and loveliness

of the Church, anointed and blessed in Christ before the foundation of the world. Her state by the Fall *was not her original one*, any more than her present state is the final one.

“Behold, I and the children whom the LORD hath given Me” (Isa. 8:18). Such were “sons” *before* God sent forth the Holy Spirit into their hearts (Gal. 4:6); they were “children” while “scattered abroad” *before* Christ died for them (John 11:51, 52); they were “children” *before* the Redeemer became incarnate (Heb. 2:14). The elect were “children” *from* all eternity and decreed to be so *unto* all eternity. They did not lose their sonship by the Fall, neither by any corruption derived from that Fall in their nature. “Children” they continued, though *sinful* children, and as such, justly exposed to wrath. Nevertheless, this relationship could not be revoked by any after-acts in time: united to Christ from all eternity, they were always one with Him. It is a remarkable fact that never once has the Holy Spirit used the prepositional form “into Christ” with reference to God's *election* of the Church, although “eis” occurs in the Epistles over six hundred times: it is always “in (Gk. “en”) Christ,” because the Church was *never out of Christ!*

From all eternity the Church stood in Christ as His mystical Body and Bride. A union between the members and their Head was then established which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. We say again, it is of vast importance that we do not lose sight of the original glory and beauty of the Church. The fall of the Church in Adam did not and could not alienate the Church from Christ, but it gave occasion for redemption, thereby affording the means and opportunity for the honour of Christ, by His work, death and resurrection bringing a greater revenue of glory to the Almighty Author of salvation than had the fall of man never taken place. Wondrous indeed are all the ways of God: in the ultimate outcome, He was no loser by Adam's defection, but the gainer; as it is written, “The LORD hath made all things *for Himself*: yea, even the wicked for the day of evil” (Prov. 16:4); and again, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise Thee” (Psa. 76:10).

“God's love to His elect is not of yesterday; it does not begin with their love to Him, 'We love Him, because He first loved us' (1 John 4:19). It does not commence in time, but dates back from eternity, and is the ground and foundation of the elect's being called in time out of darkness into marvelous light: 'I have loved thee,' says the Lord to the Church, 'with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee' (Jer. 31:3); that is, in effectual vocation. Many are the instances which might be given in proof of the antiquity of God's love to His elect, and as it is antecedent to their being brought out of a state of nature. God's choosing them in Christ before the foundation of the world was an act of His love towards them, the fruit and effect of it. His making an everlasting covenant with His Son, ordered in all things and sure, on account of those He chose in Him; His setting Him up as the Mediator of the covenant from everlasting; His donation of grace to them in Him before the world began; His putting their persons into His hands, and so making them His care and charge, are so many demonstrative proofs of His early love to them.

“There are also instances to be given of God's love to His elect while they are in a state of nature. 'When we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly . . . God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:6, 8). Now certainly these persons were in a state of nature who are said to be 'without strength,' etc., and yet God commended His love towards them when and while they were such, in a matchless instance of it. John makes use of this

circumstance respecting the state of God's elect, to magnify the greatness of God's love; 'Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins' (1 John 4:10). Again, the quickening of God's elect when dead in trespasses and sins, the drawing of them to Christ with the cords of powerful and efficacious grace in effectual vocation, are instances of His special grace and favour, and fruits and effects of His everlasting love to them.

“If God did not love His elect while in a state of nature, they must forever remain in that state, since they are unable to help themselves out of it; and it is only the love, grace and mercy of God which engage His almighty power to deliver them from thence. There are three gifts and instances of God's love to His people before conversion, which are not to be matched by any instance or instances of love after conversion. The one is the gift of God Himself to them in the Everlasting Covenant, which covenant runs thus: 'I will be their God, and they shall be My people.' The second is the gift of His Son to suffer and die on their room and stead, and so obtain eternal redemption for them. The third is the gift of His Spirit to them, to convince them of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. And now what greater instance is there of God's love to His people after conversion? If the heavenly glory, with all the entertaining joys of that delightful state, should be fixed upon, I deny it to be a greater instance of God's love, than the gifts of Himself, His Son, and Spirit; and, indeed, all that God does in time, or will do to all eternity, is only *telling* His people how much He loved them *from everlasting*” (John Gill).

Now it was this eternal love of the Triune God which gave the Church an election-union in Christ form everlasting, for that love ever considered them in Christ. As it is written, nothing “shall be able to separate us from the love of God, *which is in Christ Jesus our Lord*” (Rom. 8:39). Christ as God-man, was loved by the Father as the supreme object of His complacency (Prov. 8:30; Isa. 42:1), which was manifested in His election of Him; and the Church was the secondary object of God's love as viewed in Christ. The Lord Jesus declared to the Father, Thou “hast loved them, *as Thou hast loved Me . . . Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world*” (John 17:23, 24). Therefore as eternal election is a display of God's everlasting love to His people, so it is also an instance and evidence of their eternal union to Christ. The one cannot be without the other: if loved *in Christ*, the Church must have been one *with Him*.

It is not that election was a fore-appointing of persons *unto* an union with Christ, as stones are selected *to be* used in a building, or as a slip is chosen for engrafting into a tree. Ephesians 1:3, 4 *does not* say, “According as He has chosen us to be in Him” or “that we should be in Him.” Instead we read, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world”—the Church was blessed with all spiritual blessings *in Christ* “according as” they were chosen in Him. Election was not the original uniting act, for *that* was the everlasting love of God; yet the two must not be separated: they went together. Nevertheless, as in election the Church is considered *in Christ*, so it is a proof of their eternal union to Him. Now there are several things which *arise from* and are *branches of* this everlasting love-union of the Church to Christ, which it will now be our joy to consider. First and chief of these is *the marriage* between Christ and the Church.

It pleased the Father to choose for His Son, as God-man, the Church, to be not only His Body, but also His Bride, who was to receive from Him and share with Him His honours, glories, and privileges. Having

chosen the Church in Christ, the Father set her before Him in the glass of His decrees, according to the uttermost purpose of His love and grace toward her, causing her to shine with excelling brightness and loveliness in the view of His Son, giving Him to see how high she was in the Father's estimation, and presenting her to Christ as His choicest gift to Him. This drew out the heart of the God-man towards her, caused Him to open His arms and heart to receive her, to set His affections and delight upon her, to regard and esteem her according to the high value which the Father Himself had placed upon her.

“Thine they were,” said Christ to His Father, “And Thou *gavest them Me*” (John 17:6), to be My heritage, My portion, My bride. Here was the grand originating cause of Christ's love for His Church; the fact that she was the Father's love-gift to Him. Viewing the Church from eternity as thus presented to Him by the Father, He could not but regard her as supremely worthy of His affection and delight. His language was “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto Me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto Me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the LORD” (Hosea 2:19, 20)—let it be carefully borne in mind that the record of His words in Holy Scripture are but the *open* transcript of what He said in secret before the world began: many examples of this might be given, but we here only state the bare fact.

“The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold” (Psa. 45:13). Observe well the glorious title which the Church here bears, and mark carefully what is necessarily presupposed and clearly implied in it. The “King” is God the Father, of whom we read “a certain King, which made a marriage for His Son” (Matt. 22:2). That “marriage” was made form everlasting, and therefore could the Divine Bridegroom say to His celestial Bride, “thy Maker is thine Husband” (Isa. 54:5). Now it is by virtue of this marital union between Christ and His people that the Church is here designated “the King's *daughter*”: because the Father is *Christ's* “Father,” He is the Church's “Father” (John 20:17); because Christ is the Father's *Son*, and the Church is wedded to Him, therefore the Church is the Father's “Daughter!”

Most marvelously and blessedly was all of this shadowed out in connection with our first parents. Adam, in his creation and formation, was a type of Christ; Eve of the Church. Before Adam's creation we read of a council held between the Eternal Three concerning him: “And God said, Let *Us* make man in our image, after Our likeness” (Gen. 1:26). So it was in connection with the last Adam (Heb. 10:5, 9). Adam's body was supernaturally produced out of the virgin earth, as Christ's body was miraculously conceived by the Virgin Mary. The union between the soul and body of Adam (Gen. 2:7) adumbrated the incomprehensible union between the eternal Son of God and His assumption of our nature into oneness with His own Person. Adam's lordship, or his being given dominion over all mundane creatures (Gen. 1:28), prefigured Christ's universal headship over all things to His Church (Eph. 1:22, 23). But it is the formation of Eve and her union with Adam to which we would now direct particular attention.

“And the LORD God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him . . . . And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the LORD God had taken from man, made He a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:18, 21-23). First, behold here the tender solicitude of God toward Adam: “It is not good that man should be alone.” In this a deeper

mystery is opened unto those who have eyes to see: it is a revelation on the earth plane of what had passed secretly in the eternal councils of Heaven. Christ, as God-man—"the Beginning" of Jehovah's way (Prov. 8:22; Col. 1:18), the Fountain-head of all His decrees (Isa. 42:1; Eph. 3:11)—was the grand Object of Jehovah's love: all His vast designs concentrated in Him, concerned Him, and were designed for His manifestative glory from all eternity—"all things were created by Him, *and for Him*" (Col. 1:16).

Second, we discover here God's purpose to provide a suitable companion for Adam: "I will make him an help meet for him." This affords us a yet fuller insight into that which had passed in the Divine mind before the foundation of the world: God thought it not meet that the God-man ("set up" in Heaven before the world was: Prov. 8:23, 24) should be alone, therefore did He ordain and choose a Bride for Him. Third, God created Eve *out of Adam*, taking one of his ribs and from it and the flesh cleaving thereto made He the first woman. This also was a most striking acting out in time of what had transpired ere time began. God had chosen the Church in Christ, she was *in Him* before the foundation of the world. Christ having been "foreordained before the foundation of the world" (1 Peter 1:20) to become incarnate, and His human nature having a covenant subsistence before God, the Church, as thus considered in Him, received her human nature from Him, and hence that expression "We are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones" (Eph. 5:30) is language which most evidently refers us back to Genesis 2:23.

Fourth, out of Adam's rib the Lord God made, or as the margin more correctly renders it "*builded*" the woman, for she is of a more curious and delicate frame than the man. Now Christ is "the foundation" (1 Cor. 3:11) and the Church is His "building": built up for Him and upon Him, with heavenly art, by an infinitely wise Architect—"Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house" (1 Peter 2:5). Fifth, God then set Eve before Adam, "and brought her unto the man," and this, in order to effect *a marriage union* between them. What blessed light this casts upon the high mystery of grace, when God the Father presented the elect unto Christ. It was *to that* He referred when He said, "Thine they were, and *Thou gavest them Me*" (John 17:6)—as He gave Eve to Adam!

In our endeavour to view the eternal transactions of Divine love and grace, we must contemplate the Church as she was before Adam's defection. We must view her first, not as fallen, but as unfallen; not as involved in sin and ruin, but as the pure and spotless bride of Christ, given by the Father to Him as His Spouse. Most blessedly was this typed out in Eve as she was brought and given to Adam in all her spotless innocence. O how surpassingly fair must Eve have appeared in the morning of her creation, as she came fresh from the hand of her Maker! What could Adam do but love her and delight in the admirable bride which the Lord God had so graciously provided for him! So Christ viewing, in the glass of God's decrees, the Bride selected for Him, loved and delighted in her, betrothed Himself unto her, took her as thus presented by God unto Himself in a deed of marriage-settlement as the gift of the Father.

Let it be fully noted that Adam was joined to Eve in marriage *before* the Fall, and not after it. How this exposes the makeshift compromise of sublapsarians! Ephesians 5:31, 32 in the light of Genesis 2:23 unequivocally establishes the fact that the making of Adam and Eve *before* sin entered the world, prefigured the marriage-union of Christ and His Church, decreed of God prior to any consideration of the Fall. Nor does this stand alone. In Leviticus 21:13, 14 is another precious type equally definite and plain. There we read, "And he (namely, the high priest of verse 10) shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow,

or a divorced woman, or profane, or an harlot, these shall he not take: but he shall take a *virgin* of his own people to wife.” Now as the high priest under the law was a figure of the great High Priest over the House of God, we must see in this Divine prohibition a typical intimation that the Church was espoused to the God-man in all her *virgin purity* as she stood before Jehovah in her native innocence.

But to return unto the exquisite scene set before us in Genesis 2. We observe, sixth, that Adam *owned* the relation which now existed between himself and Eve: “This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man” (Gen. 2:23). In like manner Christ received the elect at the Father's hands, became their Husband, and from thence owned them as His everlasting Spouse. His love for her is blessedly told out in “As the Father hath loved Me, so have I loved you” (John 15:9)—eternally, infinitely, unchangeably. He speaks of her as “in whom is all My delight” (Psa. 16:3); and “How fair and how pleasant art thou, O Love, for delights!” (Song. 7:6). Seventh, as Adam was not created for Eve, but she for him, so God did not foreordain and “set up” Christ, as God-man, for the Church, but the Church was ordained for Him: “For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man; neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man” (1 Cor. 11:8, 9).

Finally, though Adam was not taken out of the woman nor created for her, nevertheless it was not good that he should be “alone”: Eve was his necessary complement, his companion, his help meet; yea, as we are told, “the woman is *the glory of the man*” (1 Cor. 11:7). In like manner, Christ, as God-man, would be incomplete without His Bride: considered as His mystical Body, she is called “the fullness of Him that filleth all in all” (Eph. 1:23). Christ needed a vessel which He might fill, that should reflect His glory; hence we read, “the messengers of the churches, and *the glory of Christ*” (2 Cor. 8:23); and again, “Israel *My glory*” (Isa. 46:13) He calls her. In the last reference made to her in Holy Writ we read, “Come hither, I will show thee the Bride, the Lamb's Wife . . . descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God: and her light was like unto a stone most precious” (Rev. 21:9-11). In and by and through the Church Christ will be glorified to all eternity.

We must leave for our next article (D.V.) the consideration of how the marriage of the Church to Christ gave her communion with His honours and interests; as we must the effects which her fall in Adam did and did not produce in her.—A.W.P.

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### **A Morning Prayer.**

O eternal God and merciful Father, which art the light that no man can attain unto, and by Thy marvellous lightness drivest away the darkness of the night and shadow of death, and by Thy grace enlightenest all those that being in darkness come unto Thee, I Thy unworthy servant, do bless and praise Thy most holy name for all the mercies and gracious benefits from time to time I have received from Thee, and most humbly thank Thee that Thou has vouchsafed me this favour, to pass this night in so quiet and comfortable rest, and hast brought me again to see and enjoy the light of the morning. And now I beseech Thee, O Lord, of Thine infinite goodness and mercy, by the merits of my blessed Saviour, that Thy merciful compassion may this day be extended to me, that, being enlightened with Thy grace, I may not be carried away by the power of darkness, to spend this day after the lusts and pleasures of my own corrupt mind; but that I may, with all conscience, follow Thy Fatherly will, which Thou hast revealed unto me in Thy Holy Word. Increase in me, O Lord, all spiritual gifts and graces, and beat down in me all carnal and corrupt affections.

Enable me by Thy blessed Spirit, in some measure, both to withstand that which is evil, and to perform what is good and pleasing unto Thee; and that neither by my own negligence, nor the power of any temptation, which either the world, the flesh, or the devil shall present unto me, I be driven away from a true faith, but may lay hold of those gracious promises that Thou hast made unto me in Jesus Christ my Saviour. Dispel, O Lord, the thick mists and clouds of my sins, which corrupt my soul, and darken my understanding; and wash them away, I most humbly beseech Thee, in the precious blood of Thy Son's

passion; that so I may be acknowledged for one of Thine elect, when I shall appear before Thy judgment-seat. Give me a will carefully to follow my vocation, and let Thy blessing be upon me in the same. Bless me in my body, in my soul, and in whatsoever belongs unto me: lighten my mind, and inflame my heart with a love of those things that are good. And as my body, by Thy power, is risen from sleep, so let my soul daily be raised from the slumber of sin and the darkness of this world, that so both together may enjoy that everlasting light which Thou hast provided for Thy saints, and purchased with the blood of Thy dear Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom with Thee, O Father, and the blessed Spirit, be all honour and glory for evermore. Amen.—(Henry Smith, 1590).

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### **An Evening Prayer.**

O Almighty and everlasting God, the Father of mercies and God of all consolation, that by Thy merciful providence defendest all those that walk before Thee, and put their trust in Thee; I, poor and miserable sinner, unworthy of the least of Thy favours, do yet presume, in the name and mediation of Jesus Christ, to present myself before Thee, and to offer up this poor sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving unto Thee; that Thou hast nourished and preserved me by Thy power, and hast guided and governed me by Thy Word and Spirit; and, as for all other Thy blessings, so far that mercy which hath this day accompanied me, whereby I have both been preserved from many sins that the wickedness of my nature was inclined unto, and also delivered from many punishments that the sins I have committed have deserved. I most humbly beseech Thee, in the merits of Christ Jesus, to pardon and forgive me all my sins, which either in thought, word, or deed, I have this day, or any time heretofore, committed against Thee; whether they be the sins of my youth or of my age, sins of omission or commission, whether wittingly or ignorantly committed; good Lord, pardon them unto me, and let them not cause Thee this night, as justly Thou mayest do, take vengeance of me; but be merciful unto me, O Lord, in forgiving the evil I have committed, and in supplying the good that I have omitted, in restoring me to that which I have lost, in healing my sores, in enlightening my blindness, in cleansing my filthiness, and in altering the whole course of my corrupt mind; that I may be diverted from that which is evil, and enabled to perform that which is agreeable to Thy blessed will and Word. And, Lord, as Thou hast this day preserved me and kept me in safety, so I most humbly beseech Thee to protect me this night from all danger, both bodily and spiritually, and to give me such quiet and comfortable rest, as may enable me to walk on in that vocation wherein Thou hast placed

me, and that I may both be delivered from the darkness of this present night, and may also escape that everlasting darkness which Thou hast provided for those that without repentance continue in their sins from which, good Lord, deliver me, and all those that belong unto Thee; and that for the merits of the death of my blessed Saviour Jesus Christ, in whose name I continue my prayers, for myself and the whole church. Amen. (Henry Smith, 1590).

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October, 1935

### **Perfect Peace.**

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa. 26:3). What is signified by a mind “stayed on” the Lord? At least three things. First, *to make the Lord the Portion of my soul*. All around us are those vainly seeking contentment in *things*: such as money, and what it can buy, social prestige, fame, pleasures, etc.—all of which are broken cisterns which hold no water. Only the One who made us can satisfy the heart; only as our affection is set upon “things above” do we drink of the Fountain of living waters. Just in proportion as “Delight thyself also in the LORD” (Psa. 37:4) will “perfect peace” be mine now.

Second, *to receive from God's hand whatsoever enters my life*. I need to cultivate the habit of looking beyond all secondary causes, all intermediary agents and human instruments, recognising that “of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are ALL things” (Rom. 11:36). “Cease ye from man” (Isa. 2:22); conclude no more it is Satan who is seeking to disturb your rest; but say, “The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it!” (John 18:11). Just in proportion as we are enabled to say from the heart “It is the LORD: let Him do what seemeth Him good” (1 Sam. 3:18) will “perfect peace” be ours in this world of sin and turmoil.

Third, *to leave the future entirely with God*. And why not? Are not my “times” in His hand (Psa. 31:15)? Has He not graciously cared for me and faithfully supplied my every need hitherto? Then why be fearful of what lies ahead? Has He not promised never to leave nor forsake me! Just in proportion as I live a day

at a time, and “Take therefore no anxious thought for the morrow” (Matt. 6:34) will “perfect peace” be mine even now. But each of these three things is dependent upon the exercise of FAITH; as the text says “because he *trusteth* in Thee.” O to know more of this experimentally.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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November, 1935

### **Union and Communion.** *3. Mystical (Completed).*

In the previous two articles on this subject we pointed out that the everlasting love of the Triune God is *the origin* of the Church's union to Christ, and that election was the first and fundamental act of that love toward its members; that election giving them a super-creation subsistence in their glorious Head. In God's eternal thoughts and foreviews, the elect were conceived and contemplated in the Divine mind as real entities in a state of pure creaturehood, above and beyond any consideration of the Fall. Even then they were “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” and “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph. 1:3, 6). It is much to be deplored that this *original* dignity and loveliness of the Church, as anointed, graced, and blest in Christ before the foundation of the world, has almost entirely disappeared from the theology even of the “orthodox” during the past century. A glorious relationship was established between Christ and the Church in eternity past, which neither sin, Satan, nor death could sever. This alone provides the key to all of God's dealings with her in a time state.

We also pointed out that several things arise from and are branches of the everlasting love-union between Christ and the Church. First and chief of these is the *marriage* between them, marvelously and blessedly shadowed out in connection with our first parents before the Fall. We will now endeavour to point out that that marital union gave the Church *communion with Christ* in His honours and interests. A wide field—”hinted at in the Introductory article—”is here set before us, which, because of our spiritual feebleness, we are not able to fully explore. Christ admits His Church into fellowship with Himself in His

names, titles, relations, grace, fullness, salvation, blessings, and benefits. As God in choosing the Church in Christ gave her a relation to His Person, giving her being in Him, so in accepting her in Him God gave Christ to her, so that she should live with Him, have communion with Him, and be like Him for ever, the everlasting object of His unchanging love.

See how this is exemplified in the Church's sharing of Christ's names and titles. As Christ is by His co-existence in the Godhead, the essential *Son of God*, so by predestination His brethren are the adopted *sons* of God, and by virtue of the marriage-union between Christ and them, they have His Father as their Father, and His God for their God (John 20:17). In Colossians 1:15 Christ, as God-man, is designated “*the Firstborn* of every creature,” while in Hebrews 12:23 His people are said to be “the Church of the *Firstborn* which are written in Heaven.” Is Christ the “Heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2), so believers are “heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). Is Christ denominated “the *Stone* of Israel” (Gen. 49:24), His people are also called “living *stones*” (1 Peter 2:5). Has Christ acquired “a name which no one knoweth but Himself” (Rev. 19:12), so also has the believer: “To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it” (Rev. 2:17). So precious is this aspect of the truth that we take leave to copy from our introductory article:

In Jeremiah 23:6 we read, “And this is His name whereby *He* shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and in Jeremiah 33:16 we are told, “And this is the name wherewith *she* shall be called, The LORD our righteousness”—“this by virtue of her oneness with Him. So again in 1 Corinthians 12:12 the Church is actually designated “the Christ,” while in Galatians 3:16 and Colossians 1:24 the Head and His Church forming one body are conjointly referred to as “Christ”; hence when Saul of Tarsus was assaulting the Church, its Head protested, “Why persecutest thou *Me*?” (Acts 9:4). But what is yet more remarkable, we find the Lord Jesus given the name of His people: in Galatians 6:16 the Church is denominated, “the *Israel* of God,” while in Isaiah 49:3 we hear God saying *to the Mediator* “Thou art My servant, O *Israel*, in whom I will be glorified”!

In Colossians 3:12 Christians are exhorted to “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies.” Each of those titles are given to the saints because of their *union with Christ*. They are “the elect of God” because *He* is God's “Elect” (Isa. 42:1); they are “holy” because conjoined to God's “Holy One” (Psa. 16:10); they are “beloved” because married to Him of whom the Father says, “This is My Beloved Son” (Matt. 3:17). Again, we are told that God “hath made *us kings and priests*” (Rev. 1:5), which is only because we are *united to Him* who is “the King of kings” and the “great High Priest.” Is Christ called “the Sun of righteousness” (Mal. 4:2)? so we are told, “Then shall the righteous shine forth *as the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13:43)! Does the Redeemer declare “I am the rose of Sharon” (Song. 2:1)? then He promises of the redeemed “The desert (their fruitless state by nature) shall rejoice, and blossom *as the rose*” (Isa. 35:1)—“the only two occasions the “rose” is mentioned in Holy Writ!

Having sought to show that the Church had a super-creation excellency, that before the foundation of the world its members were chosen in Christ, united to Christ, and blessed with all spiritual blessings; we must now point out that *sin has drawn a veil* which makes it very difficult for us to discern the *original*

purity, dignity and glory of Christ's mystical Body and Bride. It is much easier for us to apprehend our ruin and misery, and our redemption from it by the incarnation, obedience and sacrifice of the Son of God, than it is to realise what the Church was in the purpose, counsel and mind of God before sin entered the world. It is only by receiving into the mind what is revealed thereon in the Scriptures of Truth and by mixing faith therewith, that we can in any measure obtain a conception of this transcendent and glorious mystery. It is only as the Holy Spirit is pleased to shine upon our understandings that we can see the light in His light.

As Eve was united to Adam in her virgin purity and became his wife *before* she ate of the forbidden fruit, so in the will and eternal counsels of God the Church was wedded to Christ, over and above any foreviews of the Fall. As Eve disobeyed the Divine prohibition and fell from her pristine uprightness, and lost her original beauty, so the Church shared in the defection of the whole human race when its federal head (Adam) apostatized from his Maker. In God's infinite prescience He foresaw the Fall, having predetermined to permit it, and upon the foresight of that Fall, He entered into an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of the Fall, by the incarnation and finished work of Christ. In this the illustrious wisdom of God was discovered and displayed in a way which would serve to be the marvel of time and the admiration of saints in Heaven to all eternity.

In Adam, the Church was brought into this world by creation pure, holy and righteous. From that *creature* purity, holiness and righteousness, she fell by Adam's first act of transgression, and became in her own nature and person, simply considered (that is, viewed apart from her eternal standing and state in Christ), impure, unholy and unrighteous. Therefore do we read that the elect are "by nature the children of wrath even as others" (Eph. 2:3); that is, because of sin, their *nature* is repellent unto Divine holiness, and falls under the condemning sentence of Divine justice. It was to redeem or deliver the Church from the state of sin and misery, and in order to raise her up again to the enjoyment of her original state and glory, to which she was decreed or predestined, that her Head and Husband, her Lord and Saviour, became actually incarnate, taking upon Him humanity, tabernacling personally in the same, and having imputed to Him the transgressions of His people, with all the guilt thereof.

Herein we may behold not only the fathomless love and amazing condescension of Christ, but also the wondrous wisdom of God, who designed that there should be *an accurate conformity* of the Church to its Head, between the mystical Wife and her celestial Husband. By their fall in Adam, a veil was drawn over the elect, so that they cannot in their ruined state be known by themselves or by others, to be the Lord's. In their natural condition there is nothing to distinguish the elect from the non-elect: their "life is *hid* with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3). They are born into this world the same as others, with no halo of glory around their heads to mark them out as the high favourites of Heaven, with nothing to show that they are the beloved Bride of Christ. Instead, according to human observation, there is everything to the contrary: they are shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and live in a way of open revolt from the Lord.

In like manner, a veil was drawn over Christ when He appeared on the earth. As the God-man, He had a glory with the Father "before the world was" (John 17:5), and lived a life of blessedness inconceivable by us; yet He laid aside that glory and took upon Him the form of a servant. When He was born into this world, it was not in a palace, but a cattle-shed. Ah, my reader, what was there about the Babe of

Bethlehem, hanging upon His mother's breast, to indicate that He was the Maker of Heaven and earth? Witness the vile attempt upon His life and the consequent flight into Egypt, and what was there to show that He had previously been worshipped by all the hosts of Heaven? See Him later, in the lowly peasant-home of Joseph and Mary in Nazareth, and who among the companions of His boyhood dreamed He was the incarnate Son of God? View Him in early manhood, labouring at the carpenter's bench, and wherein did it appear that He was Jehovah's "Fellow"? Was not the Sun of Righteousness eclipsed for a season when He was in all things "made like unto His brethren" (Heb. 2:17)!

When the Lord of glory became incarnate, He came under a cloud, if we may so express it. He suspended the shinings forth of His essential glory, due to the dignity of His Person, and appeared in the likeness of sinful flesh, coming not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give His life a ransom for many, that He might complete the work of redemption by which He was to redeem His spouse, and wash away her deformity and stains. In this lay the depths of Christ's humiliation: that the Father's co-equal should make Himself "of no reputation," be made in the likeness of men, be made "under the law," and so humble Himself as to be "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." In Him "dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily," but for a season—"except when its beams darted forth on the Mount of Transfiguration—"the breakings forth thereof were withheld. Incomprehensible grace! such as will fill the saints in Heaven with astonishment through the ages of eternity. Alas, that our hearts are so feebly moved by it now.

Herein, then, we may perceive *the conformity* between Christ and the Church: each had a celestial glory before the foundation of the world: a veil was cast over that glory when each appeared on the earth. When the elect were brought forth into creature-existence and open being (having subsisted previously in the secret counsels of God), they were pure, holy, righteous, perfect in their natural head. Yet, being in Adam, not only by seminal union but by federal representation, when he broke the Covenant of Works and fell from God, the elect also fell in and with him into a state of sin, misery and alienation from the Lord. Therefore the Spouse of Christ became wholly unlike herself and unlike her Divine and Heavenly Bridegroom, so that she became in her natural head, and inherently in herself, altogether unholy and unrighteous, becoming sinful and impure, having undergone an eclipse of her glory, suffering the loss of the moral image of God, in which she was created: all of which is to be justly ascribed to the mutability of the creature's will—"proving that no creature has whereof to glory before God.

Estranged as the Church became in her affections and obedience to her Lord, by reason of her sunken and degraded condition through the Fall, yet the union existing between her and her celestial Husband remained the same. The very fall of the whole human race in Adam, by virtue of the mutability of the creature, only made more evident the absolute necessity of *Christ's* Headship, to the end that *by Him* the elect were so united to God by everlasting bonds as to be beyond the possibility of hazard or miscarriage or by finally falling from Him; having been blessed with super-creation grace, and that, that Christ might be the more honoured and magnified. It is His sole prerogative, as God-man, to have life *in Himself*: "For as the Father (the self-existent One) hath life in Himself; so hath He *given* to the Son (as Mediator) to have life in Himself" (John 5:26). No creature, either angel or man, "anointed cherub" or Adam when made "very good," is able to stand one moment of himself. Those who have an eternal standing before God owe it alone to Christ.

The fall of the elect of mankind (in the decree of Jehovah) was *subordinated to the glory of Christ*, it being thereby contrived to show forth and exalt His wondrous perfections. To mention here only one: consider Christ's *love for the Church*. Christ had a view of the Church in the glass of God's decrees before the world began. He saw her as graced in Himself, and destined to eternal glory. He saw her as presented to Himself by the Father as His love gift. This drew out His heart to her. He saw her as “the King's Daughter all glorious within” (Psa. 45:13). She was given to Him: they were made one by marriage-union in the everlasting settlements of Heaven. The Father blest her in Christ with all spiritual blessings. Hear Him speak as God-man before time began: “Then I was by Him, as One brought up with Him: and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him; rejoicing in the habitable part of His earth; and *My delights were with the sons of men*” (Prov. 8:30, 31).

Certainly Christ's “delights” were *not* with “the sons of men” regarded as *fallen* creatures. No, He was there contemplating them in their supralapsarian state, in their original purity and beauty. Oh how vastly different must the Church have next appeared in His eyes, when He viewed her as fallen, depraved and filthy! Yet so knit was His heart to her, such was His affection for her, that it neither destroyed nor abated the same by the foreviews He took of her apostasy in Adam. Yea, as He viewed the members of His body in their debased and vile condition, His heart was drawn out in pity and compassion toward them. Therefore was He willing to be their Surety, assume all their liabilities, fully discharge their debts, and make a complete atonement for them. Their fall in Adam occasioned an opportunity for their eternal Lover to display the changelessness of His infinite love for and to them.

“It is among the mysteries of grace, such as belong to the deep things of God, that the elect, though they fell from God by reason of sin, through the fall of the first man, by means of their union to him and interest in him; from whence they received and partook of the same equal corruption and total ruin of their natures by the infection of sin, with the rest of mankind—”having in themselves the same fountain and principle of sin which the very reprobate hath: *yet they fell not from the grace of personal election, nor from the everlasting favour of God; nor did they lose their interest in their Heavenly Father's love thereby.*

“Their union and relation to the person of Christ, their eternal Head, and interest in Him, were not dissolved nor impaired hereby; nor did they cease to be the beloved of Immanuel's soul. Though they, by the Fall, lost all that was given them, in Adam as their nature-head, and nature-root, yet, the grace of election still continued the same as ever; and Jesus Christ, their ever-living Head, in whom is their spiritual, everlasting life, happiness, and glory, was Alpha and Omega to them; their beginning, their eternal spring, who, as such, broke forth towards them in their fallen state, and still continues His kindness in dispensing all grace to them, to whom it will be continued with all its glorious fruits and blessings by Him to eternity” (S.E. Pierce).

Christ was first the “Head” and then the “Saviour” of the Church (Eph. 5:23). All is eternally secured in the Person of the Lord Jesus. When God permitted the fall of all mankind in Adam, the elect fell in him; yet they fell not from the heart and arms of Christ. They lost in Adam the creature blessings of purity, holiness and righteousness, which as their natural head he should have conveyed to them, and received from him instead an impure and sinful nature, the fruits of which are as justly deserving of Divine wrath as are the sins of the non-elect. In that state they are, in themselves, without hope and help. This it is which

made way for their need of redemption, to be delivered out of it, and which provided an occasion for their Husband to become their Redeemer, which He engaged to be before the foundation of the world. “On His head are *many* crowns” (Rev. 19:12), each representing a separate and distinctive glory, which it is the joy of saints to separately contemplate.

“The elect lost their all that was given unto them and bestowed upon them in their nature-head. But they lost not their interest in the grace of election in the Person of Christ, in the supernatural spiritual blessings which had been bestowed upon them in Christ their eternal Head; and this secured them from everlasting ruin and misery. The love of God to His elect in Christ was not weakened, nor the union-knot between Christ and His Church loosed, by all which befell them and came upon them by the Fall. Christ being the Head of the Church, the life, light, grace, holiness, righteousness, glory, and blessings in Christ, could not undergo any hazard or damage by the Fall.

“The Body being defiled with sin, the glorious Head and Husband who had loved His Spouse as Himself, having viewed her as the object of His Father's complacency and delight, descended from Heaven, by His mysterious incarnation, to fulfill His covenant stipulations on her behalf, and act a part of Redeemer and Saviour” (From “Christ's love to His Church” by S.E. Pierce, to whom we gladly own our indebtedness for much in this article).—”A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### Unpardonable Sin.

We feel that a separate though brief word on this subject needs to be added to what we said in the Hebrews' article (*December*, 1934 issue). The particular point we are here concerned with is to remove any possible misconception from the mind of the reader as to *why* there is no hope of forgiveness after a sinner has passed a certain bound, as to *why* certain sins are unpardonable. We say certain "sins," for as pointed out in the Hebrews article the "unpardonable sin" is not some one specific offense, but varies considerably in different cases—"blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is one form of it, total apostasy from the Truth is another, suicide is yet another. The sin of Esau was quite different from that of Cain's, and each of theirs from that of King Saul's. This fact of itself surely intimates that *the unpardonableness* of any sin lies not in the character of the offence itself, but must be sought for elsewhere. In this conclusion we differ from other writers on the subject.

Negatively, the unpardonableness of any sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered. By which we mean, it is not because the guilt of it is so great that the mercy of God cannot remit it. This should be obvious from a careful examination of those cases which God *has pardoned*. Take such an one as Manasseh. Peruse the dark record of his life, and bear in mind that he lived not amid the gross darkness of heathendom, but in the favoured land of Israel where God was known; that he was not a private person, but king in Jerusalem, where his evil example exerted an incalculable influence for harm; and that he was guilty of not only one or two isolated crimes, but persisted in a steady course of vile conduct for many years. Compare the recorded sins of Cain, Esau or Saul, with what is said of this monster of wickedness.

“He did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, like unto the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel. For he built again the high places which Hezekiah his father had broken down, and he reared up altars for Baalim, and made groves, and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served them. Also he built altars in the house of the LORD, whereof the LORD had said, In Jerusalem shall My name be for ever. And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. And he caused his children to pass through the fire in the valley of the son of Hinnom: also he observed times, and used enchantments, and used witchcraft, and *dealt with a familiar spirit*, and with wizards: he wrought much evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger. And he set a carved image, *the idol* which he had made, *in the house of God* . . . So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and *to do worse than the heathen*, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel. And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: *but they would not hearken*” (2 Chron. 33:2-7, 9, 10).

Surely if any man had sinned away the day of grace, Manasseh must have done so. Surely if the intrinsic evil of any offences renders them unpardonable, those committed by this man must have been such. Surely if there are some crimes too high for the mercy of God to reach unto, it must have been those perpetrated by this Satan-controlled king. Surely if one may sink too low for the Holy Spirit to deliver him, it must have been this wretch, who so grievously provoked Jehovah. Ah, read the sequel: “And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and *He was entreated of him*, and heard his supplication” (vv. 12, 13).

If, then, the case of Manasseh demonstrates that the unpardonableness of sin lies not in the enormity of it abstractly considered, the history of Saul of Tarsus makes it equally evident that it is not because the crimson of certain crimes is of too deep a dye for the atoning blood of Christ to cleanse it. This man, who by the Spirit of inspiration, denominated himself “the chief of sinners” (1 Tim. 1:15), was present at the brutal stoning of the godly Stephen—”his murderers laying down their clothes at Saul's feet (Acts 7:58). He would, therefore, hear not only that proto-martyr's sermon, but also his dying prayer. That a deep impression must have been left on his mind we cannot doubt, but instead of yielding to the convictions made upon his conscience, he resisted them, as is evident from the Lord's words, “It is hard for thee to *kick against the pricks*” (Acts 9:5).

“And devout men carried Stephen to his burial, and made great lamentation over him” (Acts 8:2). But so far from “the chief of sinners” being melted by such a tragic spectacle, he added sin to sin: “As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison” (Acts 8:3). Nor did *that* content him: “And Saul, yet breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1, 2). What a vivid picture do those words “breathing out threatenings and slaughter” set before us—”as of one possessed with an insatiable thirst for blood, like a ravenous beast seeking its innocent prey. Hear his own account at a later date. “I verily thought with myself, that I ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. Which thing I also did in Jerusalem: and many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were *put to death*, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them *oft* in every synagogue, and

*compelled them to blaspheme*; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities” (Acts 26:9-11).

Now my reader compare these atrocious deeds with the recorded sins of Cain, Esau, or Saul king of Israel. What comparison is there between them? If *they* angered God so that He gave them up to final impenitency—”which He did—”suppose you not that Saul of Tarsus provoked Him yet more sorely? Did, then, this “chief of sinners” commit offences which no atoning sacrifice could reach unto? Are there some sins too black, too heinous, too Heaven-insulting, for the blood of Christ to cleanse? If there are, must they not have been perpetrated by Saul of Tarsus? In view of the fact that *he* found mercy of the Lord, that even *his* dreadful crimes received forgiveness, are we not obliged to conclude that the unpardonableness of any sin *lies not* in its being beyond the reach of propitiation?

We are therefore shut up to one alternative: the unpardonableness of any sin must be attributed to the *sovereign will* of the Divine Judge. So He Himself affirms: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom *He will* have mercy, and whom *He will* He hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). The exercise of Divine mercy, the provision of an atoning sacrifice, the application of its virtues to particular cases, lies entirely within the good pleasure of a sovereign God. This has not been recognised and acknowledged as it ought to have been. Even good men, well taught in the Scriptures, have been guilty of speaking about what God was *obliged* to do, and what He *could not* do. The fact that Scripture repeatedly affirms that “with God all things are possible,” should curb us from limiting the Holy One of Israel, even in our thoughts. Talk not of “impossibilities” in the presence of Him who is both omnipotent and omniscient.

There is only one thing which God “cannot” do (we stoop not to such absurdities as to whether He can make two and two equal five), and that is, *act contrary to* His own infinite perfections. And therein lies His ineffable uniqueness: God cannot lie, God cannot deny Himself, God cannot be tempted with evil. And why not? Because He, and He alone, is *immutable*. Apart from acting contrary to His own perfections, God can do anything and everything He pleases. He is under no restraint whatsoever. His actions are circumscribed or constrained neither by His “nature,” His “law,” or “the good of the universe”; but are regulated solely by His own imperial *will*. The only reason why there is a universe, is because God was pleased to will it into existence. The only reason there was a law given by God to His creatures, is because it so pleased Him to enact one. True, *having given* the law, God now deals with His creatures according to its requirements. But there could have been no reason outside Himself why, in the first instance, He purposed to place His creatures under law; and therefore His *will* must be the sole source of it.

What saith the Scriptures? This, that God “worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own WILL” (Eph. 1:11). This foundational fact is exemplified and illustrated at every point. Why were the elect chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world and predestinated unto the adoption of children? Because such was “according to the good pleasure of His *will*” (Eph. 1:5). Again; “What if God, *willing* to show His wrath, and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22). Let our Sublapsarian friends note that the exercise of God's wrath—”His punitive justice—”proceeds not from any moral “necessity,” but is ascribed purely to the Divine *will*. Observe again those words “that *will* by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7), and dare not to change

them to “who *can* by no means clear the guilty.” Both justice and mercy are regulated solely by God's *will*.

Again we ask, What saith the Scriptures? This: “Therefore hath He mercy on whom He *will* have mercy, and whom He *will* He hardeneth” (Rom. 9:18). And again we affirm, Divine mercy and Divine justice are regulated solely by God's imperial will. While it be true, blessedly true, that God cannot act *contrary to* His own perfections or attributes, yet it is equally true that God is under no restraint or constraint in the *exercise* of them. Patience and power are among the excellencies of God's nature or being, but is there ever a time when He is *obliged* to *exercise* them? Perish the thought. The same is true of every other Divine perfection: the *exercise* of them is determined by nothing outside of God's own will. He is supreme sovereign, doing as He pleases, only as He pleases, always as He pleases; though never doing wrong. Nor are *we* in anywise competent to decide *what is* right and what is wrong in the conduct of the Most High. What He does *is right* simply because HE does it.

The absolute *sovereignty of God* supplies the key, and nothing else does, to the *unpardonableness* of any sin. God has sovereignly assigned the limits to which He will suffer each rebellious creature to go—”and that limit varies considerably in different cases. He has sovereignly determined when any sinner shall be finally deserted by the Holy Spirit and given over to hopeless impenitency. He has sovereignly determined when sin becomes unpardonable in the life of each transgressor. It is *this* which makes the subject so unspeakably solemn, for men have no means of knowing whether or not their very next act may seal their doom irrevocably. When Christ said to the Pharisees, “Ye *shall* die in your sins” (John 8:21), they might be allowed to live on another fifty years, and hear the Apostle Paul preach the Gospel, yet *their* day of grace was over. The sins of Manasseh and Paul were pardoned because God had *sovereignly decreed* they should be; the sins of the Pharisees were unpardonable because God had so *sovereignly ordained*. Beware then of trifling with God. Beware of continuing to provoke the Most High. He will not be mocked with impunity.—”A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **Union and Communion.**

#### *4. Federal.*

Once more we would point out that *the origin* of that union which subsists between the Church and Christ was the everlasting love of God: this it was which cemented Head and members together. The loving purpose of God gave the Church an election-union to Christ, which (for the want of a better term) we have styled the “mystical.” Inseparably connected with the election-standing of the Church before God, was its marriage to Christ, and upon that marital relationship we dwelt at length in last month's article. We are now to consider further what branched out of the mystical union in view of the Church's fall in its nature-head. Having in His high sovereignty predetermined the apostasy of Adam, upon His foreviews of the same, God engaged in an everlasting covenant with Christ, the spiritual Head of the elect, to raise them up from the ruins of their fall. What that involved and included it will now be our joy to consider.

In contemplating the Covenant of Grace [the Everlasting Covenant] which was made between God and the Mediator, it is very necessary to recognise that Christ acted therein as *the Head* of the Church. This it is which determined the title of our present article. The elect had not only a mystical union with Christ in the womb of God's decrees, but they had an actual oneness together in the sight of the Divine Law. That oneness has been variously designated by different writers: “covenant union,” “legal union,” “representative union,” “federal union,” all which signify much the same. The grand point to be apprehended here is, that Christ and His people were one in Divine election, He the Head and they the members of the mystical Body, and so likewise they are to be regarded in the Everlasting Covenant. The

Covenant was made with Christ, not as a single person, but as a common Head, representing all the elect who were given to Him in a federal way; so that what He promised in the covenant, He promised for them and on their account; and what He was promised, He received on their behalf.

This federal oneness which exists between Christ and the elect from everlasting, means that they are one in a legal sense: or to state it yet more simply, Christ and His people are looked at as one by the eyes of the law, as surety and debtor are one. The bond of this union is Christ's *suretyship*. "A relation is formed between a surety and the person for whom he engages, by which they are thus far considered as one, that the surety is liable for the debt which the other has contracted, and his payment is held as the payment of the debtor, who is *ipso facto* absolved from all obligation to the creditor. A similar connection is established between our Redeemer and those who are given to Him by His Father. He became answerable for them to the justice of God; and it was stipulated that, on account of His satisfaction to its demands, they should receive the pardon of their sins" (John Dick).

The federal union between Christ and the elect gave them a covenant-subsistence in Him, for it was as their Head and Representative that He contracted to serve. The Everlasting Covenant flowed from and was the fruit of the love and grace of God. The ordering thereof pre-supposed *sin*, for its provisions had respect to the Fall, and its effects upon the Church. It was made with Christ not as a private or single person, but as a public and common Person. As the Covenant of Works was made with the first Adam as the federal head of his posterity—so that he was "the figure of Him that was to come" (Rom. 5:14)—so the Covenant of Grace was made with Christ as the last Adam as the federal Head of His spiritual offspring. The elect, then, had a representative union to Christ in the Covenant, for all that He engaged to do, He engaged in their name and on their account; and when *He* performed its stipulations it was the same with God as if it had been done by *them*.

The bond, then, of the federal, legal and representative union between Christ and His people, is suretyship for them. Christ's entering upon that office on their behalf gave full proof of His deep and unchangeable affection to them. He loved them "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3), and as Song of Solomon 8:7 declares, "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." So it was here: not even His foreviews of the Church's apostasy in Adam, its fall into a state of degradation and defilement could change the heart of Christ toward His Bride. Her defection in Adam and her alienation from God only provided opportunity unto her eternal Lover to manifest the infinite affection He bore to her. Christ drew nigh unto God on the behalf of His Church, gave His bond, and placed Himself under obligation to pay all the debts of His people and satisfy for their sins.

Though the Church fell in Adam from her state of native innocency, she did not fall from the heart or arms of her heavenly Bridegroom. "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it" (Eph. 5:25): note "loved" *before* "gave Himself for it." And when did He first love the Church? Hear His own answer: "I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them" (John 17:26). That declaration establishes two points: the eternity and the nature of Christ's love for His Church. Christ has been loved by the Father "before the foundation of the world" (John 17:24), and He had been loved with a love which delighted in the excellency of His Person. Such was Christ's love toward His Church: it was not a love of compassion in view of the wretchedness

occasioned by her fall in Adam, but a love of *complacency*, when He first viewed her as “all glorious within” (Psa. 45:13). His “delights” with the sons of men (Prov. 8:31) were precisely the same as the Father's “delight” in Him (Prov. 8:30). Blessedly did He display that love when, in foreviews of the Fall, He presented Himself to the Father to serve as “Surety” on behalf of His Church, who was immersed in debt which she could never discharge.

Then it was that the Father said, “Who is this that *engaged* (or, as the Hebrew word is rendered, “be surety for” in Psa. 119:122; Prov. 11:15) His heart to approach unto Me?” (Jer. 30:21). That the reference here is to Christ Himself, and that His undertaking to serve as Surety was infinitely wellpleasing to God, is clear from the first part of the verse: “their Governor shall proceed from the midst of them; and I will cause Him to draw near, and He shall approach unto Me.” It was then that Christ became “a Surety of a better testament” (Heb. 7:22), substituting Himself in the place and stead of His fallen people, placing Himself under obligation to fully discharge their legal responsibility, pay their debts, satisfy for their sins, and procure for them all the blessings of grace and glory. It was then that Christ offered to “finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24). This being accepted of by God, henceforth Christ and His elect were looked upon by the law as one person.

What was then transacted in the secret councils of eternity was, “when the fullness of the time was come” (Gal. 4:4), openly manifested on earth. In order to discharge His suretyship, it was necessary for there to be a natural union (a union in human nature), between Christ and His people, for “both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all *of one*”—one nature (Heb. 2:11). Before the Son of God could take upon Him the sins of the elect, He must first assume their nature. It was meet that the Divine Law should be magnified and made honourable by One in the same nature as those by whom it had been disobeyed and dishonoured. Moreover, it was only by becoming incarnate that the second Person in the Trinity could be “made under the law.” Therefore do we read, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same; that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil” (Heb. 2:14).

The incarnation of Christ may therefore be called “manifestative union,” for at His birth there was *openly displayed* the oneness which existed between Him and His Church. “Wherefore in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the *sins of the people*” (Heb. 2:17). The elect, who had fallen in Adam, could not be conformed unto the image of Christ until He had—by amazing grace—been conformed to their image. The nature which Christ assumed was the same as that which we have, for it was the “seed” of the woman—save that it was entirely free of sin's taint. Though this union was supernaturally effected in time, yet it was the fruit of Christ's love for the Church and the fulfillment of His covenant-engagements on her behalf before time began. Though the nature Christ assumed is one that is common to all mankind, yet as Hebrews 2 so plainly intimates, it was taken by Him with a peculiar regard to the elect—His “brethren,”—the “children,” the seed “of Abraham.”

Before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that the election union, the marital union, the federal union which the Church had with Christ, and the manifest union which the incarnation gave Him to the Church,

are only so many branches of and all take their rise from the everlasting *love union*. Everything is founded upon and grows out of the eternal love of the Triune God unto the elect: *this* is the grand original, the strong and firm bond of union between the Head and His members, and is the spring of all that communion and fellowship which the Church has with Christ (and God in Him) in time, and shall have to all eternity. All is antecedent to our faith union with Christ. It is from hence that the Holy Spirit is sent down into their hearts to renew them and work faith in their souls. Faith does not give them a being in Christ, but is only one of the fruits, effects, and evidences of their being in Christ and of their union to Him.

It is true that the elect do not, and cannot, *know of* their being eternally in Christ, nor of their union to Him before the foundation of the world, until they are given to savingly believe in Him; and that, by Christ's sending the quickening Spirit into their hearts. Only then is that which before was concealed from them, revealed to them. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature" (2 Cor. 5:17): but being made a "new creature," does not put a man into Christ, rather is it *the evidence of* his being there, and without which he cannot know it. "Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His" (Rom. 8:9): nevertheless, I may be one of Christ's chosen and redeemed ones, though I have not yet the Spirit indwelling me. The *full* manifestation of our union to Christ will only appear in heaven itself, when His prayer in John 17:20-24 is fulfilled. But to return unto the present aspect of our subject.

Christ is the Friend who "*sticketh closer than a brother*" (Prov. 18:24) to His people. Nothing could dissolve the tie which had been established between them ere the world began. Nothing could quench His love to them, for "having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end" (John 13:1). Therefore, when He viewed the Church in its fallen estate, He willingly became incarnate, entered the office of Surety on their behalf, and engaged to put away all their sins and bring in a perfect righteousness for them. Christ undertook to conquer Satan, death, and Hell for His Church, and to present her before the high throne of God holy and without spot, as though she had never been defiled. This is a greater work than His making all things out of nothing, or the upholding of all things by the Word of His power. This work is the admiration and marvel of angels, and the theme of Heaven's new song.

Jehovah Jesus, the God-man, with all the love of the Godhead in His heart, in His incarnate state, stood in the law-place, room and stead of, His sinful people as their Sponsor, lived and obeyed the law for them. He was here as their Representative, and His perfect fulfillment of the law in thought and word and deed, constitutes their everlasting righteousness. When Christ had magnified the law and made it honourable, the Lord caused to meet on Him the iniquities of all His people, so that He was, imputatively, "made sin" (2 Cor. 5:21) for them. Jehovah the Father alone could dispose of iniquity, and gather all the sins of all the elect and place them on Christ: He "the Judge of all" (Heb. 12:23) was the One immediately sinned against, and therefore the only One who could provide and accept an atoning sacrifice. "*God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them*" (2 Cor. 5:19).

As "the Lamb of God" Christ was appointed and prepared from eternity as is clear from Revelation 13:8 and 1 Peter 1:19, 20. The atoning death of Christ, then, was a grand article of the Everlasting Covenant between the Father and the Son. This was decreed by God, agreed upon by the Mediator, and published by the Spirit in the Scriptures. The transferring of sin from the persons of the elect to the Person of Christ was

shadowed forth under the Old Testament sacrifices, they being substituted in the room of sinners and offered for sin—the sins of the offenders being laid upon them in a typical way: see Leviticus 4:4 and 16:21. The curse and vengeance of God's wrath which was to fall upon Christ when He should have the sins of His people laid upon Him, and be borne by Him in His own body to and on the Tree, was set forth by the fire which lighted upon and consumed the sacrifices under the law.

The covenant oneness of Christ and His Church was adumbrated by the relation which obtained between Adam and the human race, for though Christ's actual discharge of His suretyship was historically afterwards, yet in the order of God's decrees it was before it. This is clear from Romans 5:18, 19, “Therefore *as* by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; *even* so by the righteousness of One the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For *as* by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, *so* by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.” Believers are made righteous through the obedience of Christ on precisely the same principles of all of Adam's posterity were made sinners by the disobedience of their natural head: there was an identity of legal relations and reciprocal obligations and rights. In each case it was the one that was acting on the behalf of many, and doing so because of his federal union with the many.

When God accepted Christ as the federal Head of His people, they were henceforth considered as legally one: this, and this alone, being the foundation for the imputation of their sins to Him and of His righteousness to them. *This* was the foundation of all which Christ did and suffered for them, and for them alone; and for all the blessings of grace which are or shall be bestowed on them; which blessings are denied all others. To discharge their legal liabilities, Christ entered upon the office of Surety, in consequence of which He became responsible to the law for His people: so truly so, that the benefit of His transactions redounds to them. As Adam's transgression was imputed to us because we were legally one with him, so our iniquities were imputed to Christ because He stood before the law as our Sponsor; and in like manner, His obedience and its reward is reckoned to our account: “For He (God) hath made Him (Christ) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21).

It is of vast importance to perceive that the saving-work of Christ was performed not only *for* His people, but that He did it as *in union with* them, so that the Church has such an interest in all her Head did and suffered for her sake, that she was one with Him, yea, *in Him*, in all His actions and sufferings. He loved *them*, was born for them, lived for them, died for them, rose from the grave for them, and ascended into Heaven for them. But more: they were one with Him at every point. They were crucified “*with Christ*” (Gal. 2:20), “buried with Him” (Col. 2:12), “and hath raised us up *together*, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:6). These expressions indicate not only the *intimacy* of the federal union, but the efficacy of the same, for the validity and virtue of His actions are reckoned to her. In Christ the Church is holy and righteous, pure and spotless: “ye are complete *in Him*” (Col. 2:10).

In the grand fact of federal union, and nowhere else, do we obtain an adequate answer to the age-long question of infidels, “How could Christ, a perfectly innocent person, *justly* suffer the curse of the law? If he were guiltless in Himself, then how could the Judge of all the earth *righteously* cause His sword to smite Him?” This objection loses its air of plausibility once the clear light of Christ's Covenant Headship

is thrown upon it. Christ *voluntarily* suffered in the room and stead of others. If it be asked, What righteous principle justified His dying as a *Substitute*? “the just for the unjust?” the answer is, That gracious substituting of Himself as a victim for His people was the discharge of His *Suretyship*. If the inquiry be pressed further back still, “And what justified Christ's entering upon His office of Surety? the answer is, *His Covenant-oneness* with His people. And what moved Him to enter into His covenant engagement? LOVE, love to His Bride as He foresaw her fallen into sin.

In view of what has just been pointed out, must we not join the Apostle in exclaiming “O *the depth* of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Rom. 11:33). Contrariwise, are we not also obliged to lament “O the dreadful *superficiality* of present-day preaching (?) of the Cross!” It was by a voluntary act on Christ's part, out of love to God and His people, that He offered to serve as the Surety of His elect, substitute Himself in their fallen stead, and bear the full punishment due their sins. Because their guilt was imputed to Him, the Father, without the slightest impeachment of His holiness and justice, exacted satisfaction from the Sponsor. In like manner, in perfect righteousness, God imputes Christ's merits to them. Therefore, no one considered as innocent, suffered; and none, considered guilty, escaped. The blood shed by Christ was “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb. 13:20), and therefore has God promised Christ “By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth *Thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water” (Zech. 9:11).

The *effect* of this federal union is the Church's *communion* with Christ in all the benefits which His infinitely-meritorious work as Surety procured. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are *in* Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1); “In the LORD have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24); “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace” (John 1:16). The elect have a community with their Head in His covenant standing and rights: *His* God and Father is *their* God and Father (John 20:17). The one Spirit who sanctified, anointed, sealed, and graced Him, does the same (according to their measure) for them. They have fellowship with Him now in His sufferings, and shall have fellowship with Him in His glory throughout eternity. May writer and reader be enabled to “mix faith” with this blessed truth to the praise and glory of Him “who loved us and gave Himself for us.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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January, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *5. Vital.*

In last month's article it was shown God established a legal or federal union between the Redeemer and those who were to be redeemed by Him, so that He became answerable for them to the Divine justice. But something more was necessary in order to *their actual enjoyment* of the benefits of Christ's representation. God not only determined that His Son should sustain the character of their Surety, but also that a vital and spiritual relation should take place between them, through which there should be *conveyed to them* the benefits of His purchase. God ordained that as Christ and the Church were one in the law, so also they should be one experimentally: that not only should His righteousness be imputed to His members, but that His very life should also be imparted to them.

Though the elect were federally united to Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, yet until they are regenerated they are personally and experimentally *far from* God and Christ, so far as their actual state is concerned. This is abundantly clear from, "Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . . that at that time ye were *without Christ*, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:11, 12). But at the new birth, Christ unites them to Himself in a vital way: this He does by sending His Spirit to take possession of them and communicate to them a principle of spiritual life, namely, His *own* life, whereby they are made *living* members of His Body, the Church. Previously we were "in Christ" mystically (Eph. 1:4) and representatively (1 Cor. 15:22), now we are "in Christ" vitally (2 Cor. 5:17; 12:2; Rom. 16:7).

As we were not the actual possessors of Adam's guilt until we were conceived by our mothers and thereby united to him by carnal generation, neither are we the actual possessors of Christ's merits until we are quickened by His Spirit and thereby united to Him by regeneration. While there was a legal union between Adam and us in Eden, yet not until we are born into this world do we enter into personal communion with what his conduct entailed. In like manner, though there was a federal union between Christ and us when He served as our Sponsor, yet not until we are born again do we begin to enjoy that which the discharge of His Surety-engagement obtained for us. Though there was a mystical and federal union between Christ and His people, not until their regeneration can they have any *communion* with Him.

The human race was inseparably linked to Adam in a *double* way—federally and naturally, as he was both the legal representative and father of his posterity. So too the elect are related to Christ in a double way—federally and vitally, as He is both their legal Representative and their spiritual Quickener: “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous” (Rom. 5:19). Those whom Adam represented (the first “many”) were “made sinners” judicially the moment he fell, but they were only “made sinners” experimentally when they were “shapen in iniquity” (Psa. 51:5). Those whom Christ represented (the second “many,” which is *not* co-extensive with the first) were “made righteous” judicially when He rose again from the dead, but they are only “made righteous” experimentally when they are born again and believe.

This is only another way of saying that Christ's *Headship* is of a twofold character: He is unto His mystical Body both a Head of government and a Head of influence. The term “head” has a twofold extension in our common speech: it is that by which we name the highest part of our physical organism, and it is also that by which we describe the chief ruler, be he over a family, a corporation, or a nation. Such is its significance as applied to Christ: He is both the Life and the Lord of His people. Remarkably has God caused this to be adumbrated in the natural realm: sever the head from the physical organism, and all its members are at once reduced to a state of lifelessness. Likewise, if the brain were removed, the members become incapable of action—they are regulated and dominated by the mind.

In the natural body the head is the seat of sensation, and from it feelings and motions are communicated to all of its members by means of the nerves which have their origin in the brain. Here again the natural supplies an object-lesson of the spiritual. It is from Christ, the Head, there flows that life and grace by which the members of His mystical Body are enabled to perform the various functions of the Christian life. “May grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: *from whom* the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love” (Eph. 4:15, 16). It is from the Head there proceeds that which causes “the effectual working in the measure of every part” of His Body.

The same blessed truth is set before us again in, “And not holding the Head, *from which* all the body by joints and bands having nourishment ministered, and knit together, increaseth with the increase of God” (Col. 2:19). Here the Apostle was setting forth the evil tendency of one of the errors of Gnosticism, which now occupies a prominent place in the vile system of Romanism. Under the pretense of honouring Christ

and abasing man, the Gnostic taught that He was so far above us in the scale of being that access could only be obtained to Him via the angels (v. 18). In like manner, Romanism introduces various mediators between Christ and the sinner. But this is failing to hold fast the doctrine of the Head. It is only by *immediate* union and communion with Christ Himself that His members are nourished and strengthened.

Christ, then, is not only the Head of authority, the Lord and Ruler of His Church, but He is also the Head of influence—its Quickener and Nourisher. In God's appointed time, the Lord Jesus sends down the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His people when they are dead in trespasses and sins, imparting spiritual life to their souls, and thus making them one with Himself in a *vital* way; and this He does by virtue of the prior mystical and federal union existing between them. It is our *eternal* union with, interest in, and relation to the Person of Christ in the Everlasting Covenant, which is the foundation of the Spirit's work in our souls during the time-state. It is by communicating His own life into the members of His Body, the Church, that their mystical and legal union with Him is then made real and actual to them in their own experience.

As Adam is the root of generation, so Christ is the root of regeneration; note “His seed” and “the travail of His soul” in Isaiah 53:10, 11. If we had not been in Adam by Divine creation, we would not have been produced from him by generation; and had we not been given a super-creation being in Christ by Divine election, we had never been manifested in Him by regeneration. Had there been no *oneness with* Christ, there could be no *life from* Him; and if no life, then no justification, salvation, or glorification. And in order to our having life from Christ, we must receive His Spirit; for as our physical bodies are lifeless without the natural spirit (James 2:26), so the soul is spiritually dead without the Spirit of God. At regeneration the Holy Spirit becomes to the soul—though in a far more excellent manner—what the soul is to the body with respect to its animal and rational life.

The vital union which is effected between Christ and His people is a work of God by which His elect are made spiritually one with their Head, for the same Spirit which indwells Him now takes up His abode within them. Herein we may perceive how each Person in the Holy Trinity is distinctively honoured, and endeared unto us. God the Father gave us a mystical union to Christ when He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. God the Son gave us a legal union to Himself when He took upon Him the office of Surety. And God the Spirit gives us a vital union to Christ by imparting to us His life and making us living members of His Church. It is only by means of this third union that the first and second are made manifest to us: “*Hereby know we that we dwell in Him, and He in us, because He hath given us of His Spirit*” (1 John 4:13).

This union has also been variously designated by different writers. It has been called the “new-creation” union, because it is effected by our being born again. It has been called the “influential” union, because only through it do we receive the virtues of the mystical and federal unions. It has been called the “manifestive” union, because by it is revealed to us our eternal oneness with Christ. We have called it the “vital” union because it is that which gives us a living relation with Christ. This it is which capacitates the Christian to know Christ, to receive Him, to have communion with Him, to live upon and enjoy Him. The Spirit unites us to Christ at the very first moment the “good work” of God is “begun” (Phil. 1:6) in the heart. Then it is that we are “delivered from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of God's dear Son” (Col. 1:13), so that we are brought into open and actual fellowship with Him.

Then also it is that we are “made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col. 1:12). It was Christ's work *for* us which secured our *title* to the heavenly inheritance, but it is the Spirit's work *in* us which supplies the *fitness* or capacity to enjoy the same. This is confirmed by what we read in 2 Corinthians 5:5: “Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit.” The context here is also speaking of the heavenly inheritance of the saints, when “mortality shall be swallowed up of life.” And “for” that inheritance (the “selfsame thing”) God hath “wrought us” or fashioned and fitted us, for we are “His workmanship created in Christ Jesus” (Eph. 2:10). In addition to the *evidence* which His work in our souls gives us, that we are vessels of mercy “prepared unto glory,” the Spirit Himself indwells us as an *earnest* or guaranty of our future bliss.

Christ has a threefold union with the Church, and the Church has a threefold union with Him. First, He had a mystical union, when God elected Him to be the Head of His Church. Second, He had a legal union, when He agreed to serve as our Representative and Sponsor. Third, this began to be *openly effected* when He became incarnate, entering into a natural union with us by being made flesh. In like manner, our mystical and federal union with Christ becomes manifest and efficacious when we are vitally joined to Him by the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. The entrance of Christ into our nature capacitated Him to discharge His office-work of Surety, and fitted Him to be a merciful High Priest who could be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. The communication of Christ's nature unto us qualifies us for communion with Him and fits unto the discharge of our Christian duties “he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17).

As in our natural bodies, the members receive life (the animal spirits) from their head, so in the mystical Body of Christ the members receive the life-giving Spirit from their Head. This, we believe, is the meaning of John 1:16, “And of His fullness have all we received, and grace for grace.” What is signified *here* by Christ's “fullness?” Let it be noted that in John 1:16 Christ is not presented absolutely as the second Person in the Godhead, but as incarnate (v. 14), as the God-man Mediator, as the next verse shows. What then, was His “fullness” as Mediator, *furnishing Him* for the discharge of that office? Was it not His being “anointed with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 10:38)? Is not the key to this word “fullness” in John 1:16 found in John 3:34, “For God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him”?—Christ as God-man was capacitated to receive the Spirit *without* “measure,” to receive Him in all His fullness.

Therefore it is that Christ is represented as “He that *hath* the seven Spirits of God” (Rev. 3:1), that is, the Spirit in His plenitude or fullness—cf. that sevenfold reference to the Spirit as given in Isaiah 11:1, 2! Thus Christ's *Mediatorial* “fullness” is the Holy Spirit indwelling Him *without* “measure.” But let it be observed that Christ received the Spirit not for Himself alone, but also for and in order to communicate Him to His people. This is clear from Acts 2:33, “having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He hath shed forth this (at Pentecost), which ye now see and hear.” Thus “out of (Greek) His fullness have all we received” signifies that Christ has communicated to us the same Spirit He received—called “the Spirit of Christ” (Rom. 8:9) and “the Spirit of His Son” (Gal 4:6). A beautiful illustration of this is found in John 20:22, “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, *Receive ye* the Holy Spirit.”

Perhaps a word should be given upon the last clause of John 1:16, for we have never seen any

interpretation of it which quite satisfied us: “and grace for grace.” Just as the same life which is in the vine is in each of its branches producing “after its *own* kind,” so the same “grace” (the same in nature, though not in degree) which the Spirit produced in Christ (*see* Luke 2:40 and 52!) He reproduces in His people. Was the lovely “fruit” of Galatians 5:22, 23 found in it *fullness* in Christ?—then the Spirit works the same in us *in measure*. “Grace for grace,” then, means grace *answerable to* grace: the same spiritual excellency which abides in the Head, is communicated to the members of His Body; and thus are they being “conformed” unto His “image.”

“The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). It is as such that He sends forth the Holy Spirit into the hearts of His own. “He saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit; which He shed on us abundantly *through Jesus Christ* our Saviour” (Titus 3:5, 6). “But ye have an Unction from the Holy One” (1 John 2:20): the “Unction” (the Greek word for which is rendered “anointing” in 2 Cor. 1:21 and 1 John 2:27) is the Holy Spirit and He comes to us from “the Holy One,” that is, Christ (Psa. 16:10, Mark 1:24). A blessed type of this is seen in Psalm 133:2, “The precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.” Here we behold the high priest of Israel anointed unto his holy office, and the “precious ointment”—emblem of the Holy Spirit—proceeding from his head to that part of his vestments which touched the earth!

“There is one Body, and one Spirit” (Eph. 4:4) which animates it: “For by one Spirit are we all baptised into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13). As the soul and body of man are so united as to form one entire person, so God's elect and their Head are so united as to form one mystical and spiritual Body, the Church. Just as the human soul gives a living union between the most widely separated members—the head and the feet—so the Divine Spirit livingly unites together the Head in Heaven and His members on earth. “If a man were never so tall that his head should reach the stars, yet having but one soul, he would be but one man still. Though Christ in His nature be exceedingly distanced from us, yet there being but one and the selfsame Spirit in Him and in us, we are one mystical Christ” (John Owen).

The distance between Christ in Heaven and believers on earth is no obstacle to their vital union, for being God, the Spirit is *Omni-present*, and therefore does He indwell both Head and members. A very striking proof of the Spirit's being the living bond of union between Christ and the Church is found in Romans 8:11: “But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall *also* quicken your mortal bodies *by His Spirit* that dwelleth in you.” The saints will not be raised from the dead by the naked power of God *without* them, but by virtue of their risen Head sending forth the quickening influences of His Spirit *within* their bodies. This is wonderfully adumbrated in the natural: when awakening out of sleep, the animal spirits arouse the *head* first, and then the senses are awakened throughout the whole body!

A real living union is effected between Christ and His members, not (as it were) by soldering two souls together, but by the Spirit anointing and indwelling *both*, for He being *infinite* is able to conjoin those who, in themselves, are so far apart. The whole person of the Christian (1 Cor. 6:15) is united to the whole Person of Christ: “At that day ye shall know that I am in My Father, and ye in Me, and I in you” (John

14:20). The same Spirit who lives in our exalted Redeemer, lives in His people on earth. By this spiritual union a far more blessed relation is established than which obtains between a king and his subjects, or even between a husband and wife: the tie connecting Him with His people is so intimate that He indwells them—”*Christ liveth in me*” (Gal 2:20).

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit, be with you all” (2 Cor. 13:14). Let it be duly noted that as “grace” is predicated of Christ and “love” of God (the Father), so “communion” is as expressly ascribed to the Holy Spirit; and, as we said so often in the earlier articles of this series, there can be no “communion” unless there first be *union*. It is by the Spirit there is union and communion between Christ and the Church. “Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His” (Rom. 8:9), that is, he is not yet grafted as a *living* member into His mystical Body. Let it be pointed out in conclusion that, blessed and glorious as is this vital union, yet it falls far below the “Mediatorial union: that was two distinct natures (the Divine and the human) forming together *one Person*; this is of different persons being joined together so as to make *one Body*, the Church.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1936

### **Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures.**

“All scripture is given by inspiration of God” (2 Tim. 3:16). The word “inspire” signifies to in-breathe, and breath is both the means and evidence of *life*; for as soon as a person ceases to breathe he is dead. The Word of God, then, is vitalized by the very life of God, and therefore it is a *living* Book. Men's books are like themselves—dying creatures; but God's Book is like Himself—it “liveth and abideth for ever” (1 Peter 1:23). Yet, let it be pointed out that, unless we are on our guard, our belief of this fact is liable to lead us into error. Because the Scriptures are a living Book, some seem to think they possess, abstractly, some magical virtue of their own. Have you never heard one say, “Give them the Word of God: it will do its own work”; he meant well, but expressed himself inaccurately.

More than the Scriptures are needed to bring a sinner out of darkness into God's marvellous light, namely, the Person and work of *the Holy Spirit*. It is only as He *applies* the Word that the conscience is pierced, the heart searched, and the will moved. Perhaps some one retorts, “But did not Christ say in John 6:63 'the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life,' and does not that prove the very words of Scripture are life-giving?” Ah, go back to the first part of that very verse: “It is *the Spirit* that quickeneth”! We must not separate the Spirit from the Word: He is the Divine Agent, the Word is the instrument which He uses.

On the other hand, we must not exalt the Spirit to the detriment of the Word. It is sadly wrong to say that, “Apart from the Spirit, the Scriptures are a dead letter.” How *can* they be such when “inspired of

God”—instinct with His very “breath” or life! Well, then, since they are a *living* Word, will they not impart life of themselves? No. Let me use an illustration. The farmer sows wheat in his ground: it is good wheat, possessing a living germ. Will *it* “do its own work” and yield an increase? Not of itself: if there be no rain, there will be no grain. So the Seed of the Word may lie in the hearts of sinners, but until the Spirit descends as dew from Heaven, it never springs up into life.

The Scriptures, then, are the living Word of the living God. Observe carefully how our opening passage expresses it: “All Scripture IS given by inspiration of God,” *not* “all Scripture *was* given by inspiration of God,” as man would have expressed it. The Holy Scriptures not only *were* “inspired of God,” but they *are* so now. They come as really and as truly God's Word *to us*, as they did unto those to whom they were first addressed. In substantiation of what I have just said, it is striking to note “Wherefore as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Heb. 3:7, 8); and again, “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit *saith* (not “said”) unto the churches” (Rev. 2:7). Now a book that presents itself to us as a Messenger from Heaven should have convincing credentials to set before those to whom it comes; and such it has: its high claims are well attested.

First, we call attention to *its self-evidencing authority*. Let me explain what I mean by that expression. Health is self-evidencing: the bright eye, the glowing cheek, the firm step, manifest that its possessor is hale and hearty. Fire is self-evidencing: it carries its own conviction to our senses, so that other witness or proof is quite unnecessary. Light is self-evidencing: it supplies its own demonstration; it is the very nature of light to manifest itself, yea, it does so by a necessity of its nature. Now the Scriptures are *light*—heavenly, spiritual, Divine. They clearly evidence they are sure by giving illumination unto all upon whom they shine: “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105).

Just as God's works in creation have stamped upon them the unmistakable marks of His power and wisdom, so has His Word. The surest way to ascertain this is to read and study if for yourselves, for the majesty and authority of its Author shines through every page. An astronomer might prove to you by accurate calculation that at nine tomorrow morning the sun will be above the horizon; but what need would I have of his mathematical demonstration if my own eyes beheld it and my whole body was warmed by its genial rays? The Scriptures need not the voice of the “Church” to authenticate them. They authenticate themselves by their own uniqueness and by the spiritual effects which they, under the Spirit, produce on those who read and yield to them.

Second, a word upon *its suitability for our times*. The Bible was completed eighteen hundred years ago, when by far the greater part of the world were Barbarians. Yet it comes to us as something far more than an interesting relic of the past: its sacred contents are exactly suited to *our needs*. Here is a remarkable phenomenon: God breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life, and he became a living soul; He also breathed into the Scriptures: and therefore they are a living Book, one which has upon it the dew of perpetual youth. Herein it differs from all other books: the writings of men soon become out of date. Take any other writings as old as the Pentateuch—three thousand five hundred years—and what do you find? Why something to be placed in a museum, side by side with the Egyptian mummies.

The literary relics of antiquity have no application to our own times. They are musty documents relating to

a state of society long since passed away and buried in oblivion: they are of no practical worth *to us*. How striking is the contrast! Here is God's Word for us today, exactly suited to our own needs. It is suited to every age, to every clime, to every class. And why? Because in and through it there speaks the voice of Him who changes not. Millions of books have been written since the Canon of Scripture was closed, yet today we know no more about the origin of life, the nature and duty of man, the character of God, or the future, than did the readers of Scripture two thousand years ago!

Third, let me call attention to *its historical narratives*. Everything about the Scriptures is unique: even the history found in it is so. In the first place, it *contains* that which no other records, namely, a satisfying accord of the creation of the heavens and the earth—which is in marked contrast from the cosmogonies of the heathen. It furnishes a satisfying explanation of the origin of man and how he became a sinful creature—which is in marked contrast from the fables of antiquity. We know nothing whatever of the first fifteen hundred years' history of the world apart from the Scriptures. In the second place, its *omissions* are equally striking. Its method of chronicling events is entirely different from all human histories. It ignores those events which are most interesting to men of the world, and which govern the pen of all human historians—the great empires of antiquity and men of renown are passed by in silence, or mentioned only so far as they bear on the main subject.

In the third place, consider the history *of Israel* recorded in Scripture. Had the Old Testament been the product of uninspired Jews, a desire for applause had caused them to magnify the exploits and courage of their nation, and their victories had been trumpeted as the result of *their* unparalleled military skill and valour. Why was not the capture of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan attributed to the brilliance of Joshua and the bravery of his men? Never is a single victory ascribed to *their own* prowess. Nor are their successes ascribed to the mere partiality of God, but rather did He bless their arms when they were subject to His will, and caused them to suffer defeat when they had followed a course of disobedience.

Fourth, the fact *of personal confirmation*. Those who submit themselves to the authority of the Scriptures obtain an inward proof of their Divine Authorship. In his own experience the Christian finds a personal corroboration of the teachings of God's Word: “The entrance of Thy words giveth light” (Psa. 119:130) is verified in his own soul. “The Gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16): this he has proved for himself, so that he is able to affirm “I *know* that my Redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25). In like manner, he now knows for himself that God hears and answers prayer: he has daily evidence in his own life that the Divine promises are reliable. Again; he reads “The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9): this also he *knows* to be true, for such is his actual experience inwardly.

Let me now anticipate an objection. Since the proof for the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures is so clear and abundant, why is it that the great majority of our fellows refuse to receive them as God's Word? why is there such a widespread unbelief of their authenticity and authority? It is not because of the lack of plain and decisive testimony, but because men have so long abused the eyes of their souls that they cannot perceive its glory. But this only *verifies* their teachings, and shows that the unregenerate are just what the Scriptures declare them to be—possessed of a carnal mind which is enmity against God (Rom. 8:7), and who love darkness rather than the light (John 3:19).

But the mere fact *you* are fully convinced of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, is no proof, in itself, that your *heart* is right with God—the Devil believes the same! Those brought up under sound teaching are in danger of mistaking orthodox views for a work of Divine grace in the soul. Finally, since the Scriptures *are* the Word of God, they have unique claims upon us, and demand unquestioning submission from us. They contain far more than good advice or wise counsel: they utter the commands of the living God which we disregard to our eternal undoing.

N.B. The above is a digest of the editor's first address in Scotland: in Bethany Hall, Camelon, Falkirk.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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February, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *6. Saving.*

That which unites the believer to Christ may (for the purpose of simplification) be likened to a golden chain, a chain possessing a number of distinct links, yet inseparably welded together. The first of these links we denominated “mystical,” having reference to our original uniting to Christ, when the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world. The second link we denominated “federal,” having reference to our covenant-oneness with Christ, wherein He served as our Surety, we having a representative or legal being in Him. The third link we denominated “vital,” having reference to the Spirit's quickening us, whereby we became livingly united to our Head in Heaven. Now, this wondrous chain is let down still lower, for the fourth link in it is formed by our personally cleaving unto Christ. This is a union *unto* Christ, as the previous ones were *in* Him.

In last month's article we pointed out that it is by means of the vital union that our mystical and federal oneness with Christ is made manifest. Not until the Holy Spirit has brought us from death unto life can we have any experimental knowledge of the Father's love and the Son's work for us. In like manner, it is not until we have a *saving* union with Christ by our believing in Him, that we have any personal evidence we have been vitally joined to Him. In other words, we are only able to apprehend the outworking of God's eternal purpose *in the inverse order* to His execution of it: He proceeds from cause to effect, but we have to work back from effect to cause. Or, to use the terms of our illustration: as we grasp the lowest link in the chain *that* brings into our view the one next above it.

Thus, the whole of this article will supply answer to a question which may have been raised in exercised readers by the last one, namely, *How* may I ascertain whether or not spiritual life has actually been communicated to *my* soul? O how urgently it behooves each one of us to earnestly and prayerfully examine ourselves on this all-important matter. Before developing the distinctive theme of this article, and as a suitable introduction thereto, let us offer one or two observations by way of determining the above matter. First, where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual *sensibility*: “senses exercised to discern both good and evil” (Heb. 5:14). Just as our natural senses recognize and feel the difference between cold and heat, so the spiritual senses of a quickened soul perceive and feel the difference between good and evil, sin and holiness. If there be spiritual life within, the soul cannot but be sensible of and groan under the burden of sin.

What we have just alluded to is something radically different from those prickings of conscience and pangs of fear which the unregenerate are sometimes conscious of. They may be alarmed at the condemnation of sin, but they are not grieved and horror-stricken at its pollution. They may be terrified of Hell, yet never horrified at displeasing God. They are mortified if a fellow-creature discovers them in a lie, but they make no conscience of it Godwards. Second, where there is spiritual life, there is spiritual *hunger and thirst*: “As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word” (1 Peter 2:2). Those who have been born again have a strong intuition that none but Christ can meet their deep need. Third, if there be spiritual life, there must be spiritual *activity*. This will be enlarged upon as we proceed.

It may surprise some of the more critical readers that we have drawn a sharp distinction between vital union and saving union, for many suppose they are one and the same, that the moment a sinner is born again he is actually saved. Not so: regeneration and salvation are quite distinct, though the one necessarily makes way for the other. We are not “saved” until we personally “*believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31). But as saving faith is a spiritual act, one who is spiritually dead cannot perform it. The Spirit quickens the soul in order to capacitate it unto a saving faith in Christ. Note carefully the order in 2 Thessalonians 2:13, “God hath from the beginning chosen you *to* salvation *through* sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the Truth”: the “sanctification of the Spirit” is His impartation of life, whereby He separates us from those who are dead in sins, and this *precedes* our “belief of the Truth.”

It is the Spirit's quickening of us into newness of life which lays the foundation for feeling our deep need of Christ and casting ourselves upon Him. Until the sinner be regenerated, there can be no repentance unto life, no believing unto salvation, no hope which maketh not ashamed. As the union which exists between a man's soul and his body is absolutely necessary in order for him to think and reason, speak and perform such actions as are in keeping with his natural life; so a vital union between the soul and Christ is indispensable in order to enable us to perform any spiritual functions. No vital act of faith can be put forth by us until a vital principle has been communicated to us: notice the order in “whosoever (1) liveth and (2) believeth in Me shall never die. Believest thou *this*?” (John 11:26)—how few *do* believe that the impartation of spiritual life precedes faith.

“Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God” (John 3:3), still less is he capable of entering it. Until a supernatural work of grace has been wrought upon his heart, fallen man is utterly

incapable of discerning the nature of God's kingdom, the superlative excellency of it, or the way of entrance into it. "No man can come to Me," said Christ, "except the Father which hath sent Me draw him" (John 6:44), and that Divine "drawing" consists first in his being brought out of spiritual death and made "a new creature" in Christ. When that miracle of grace takes place, the subject of it is still *the same person* he was before, but he has been "renewed" by a principle of spiritual life being infused into him from above, and now he has new desires and aspirations, which issue in a new experience and conduct.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. But as many as received Him, to them gave He power (the right) to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name" (John 1:11, 12). When Christ appeared unto the Jewish nation, the great majority in it "despised and rejected" Him. But here and there was one who "received Him": received Him as the Sent One of God, received Him as the Lord of their hearts and lives, received Him as the all-sufficient Saviour. And why *did* those "receive" Christ? Was it because *their* wills were less stubborn than their fellows? Not at all. Our question is answered in the explanatory verse which immediately follows: "Which (those who "received Him") *were born*, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but *of God*." What could be clearer: those who receive Christ are *previously* born of God.

No sinner believes savingly in Christ until he has been convicted of his lost condition and made to feel his dire need of a Saviour, and that is not until God has "begun a good work *in him*" (Phil. 1:6). No man will truly come to Christ until he has been quickened by Christ. Nor does that statement conflict in anywise with his own words "Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life" (John 5:40). If the unregenerate *would* come to Christ, there is life for them. They ought to come: they are freely invited to come: but they "will not," and no argument or persuasion of man can induce them to do so. Were God to do nothing more than send the Gospel to the unsaved, in every instance it would fall on deaf ears and unresponsive hearts. "Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned" (Jer. 31:18): we had to be turned *by* God before ever we turn *to* Him.

The trouble with so many today is that their theology is derived from their experiences, instead of from the Scriptures. They prefer to follow the testimony of their senses, instead of the teaching of God's Word. The first thing of which the Christian became conscious was *his* sense of need, *his* realization that he was a lost sinner, *his* crying unto God for mercy, *his* turning to Christ. And because he was *not conscious* of the quickening work of the Spirit within him *before* he was ever awakened and convicted, he is very slow to allow the reality of it. But this ought not to be: "to the Law and to the Testimony" must be the final court of appeal. Were we not alive physically (in the antenatal state) long before we had any consciousness of our existence? So it is spiritually: there must be life, before there can be the consciousness of that life.

A supernatural Object requires a supernatural faith, and this the natural man is utterly incapable of putting forth. He must, then, have imparted to him a spiritual life ere he can savingly believe on the Lord Jesus. "This faith is not merely a natural act of the mind, assenting to the truth of the Gospel, as it assents to any other truth upon reliable testimony; but it is a supernatural act, an effect produced by the power of the Spirit of grace, and is *such* a persuasion of the truth as calls forth exercises suitable to the nature of its object. It is a cordial approbation of the Saviour, heartily consenting to His offers, an acceptance of Him in His entire character, as Prophet, Priest, and King" (J. Dick). Saving faith is the heart going off all others

and cleaving to Christ alone.

Now Christ's design in quickening us is that we should turn to and put our trust in Him, for we are not *saved* until we do so. “For by grace are ye saved *through faith*” (Eph. 2:8). True, we are not saved because of our faith; yet, we cannot be saved without it. Rightly did Thomas Brooks, the Puritan, affirm, “Faith in its place is as necessary as the blood of Christ is in its place.” “To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever *believeth* in Him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). The righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ is “unto all and upon all them that *believe*” (Rom. 3:22), and it is not upon them until they do. Christ is a “propitiation through *faith* in His blood” (Rom. 3:25), for His blood avails none but those who *plead* it. To the Hebrew Christians Paul wrote, We are “of them that *believe to the saving of the soul*” (Heb. 10:39).

Let us not confuse things that differ. Though it be true that the elect were saved in the purpose of God before the world began (2 Tim. 1:9), and that they were saved representatively when their Head rose again from the dead (Eph. 2:6), yet they are not saved personally and actually until they “come unto the knowledge of the Truth” (1 Tim. 2:4). Trusting in Christ obtains something more than a *knowledge* of our salvation: it brings salvation itself to us. Surely there is no salvation actually bestowed where an individual's sins have not yet been “remitted,” and no one's sins are remitted until he has believed (Acts 10:43). Nor is this making a saviour of faith: Christ is the Saviour, but faith must lay hold of Him for salvation. Nothing but food will save a starving man from death, yet food untouched will serve him nothing. It is not his *eating* which saves him, yet the food *must* be eaten if he is to be saved!

While it be true, on the one hand, that faith does not give us a being in Christ, but rather is our cleaving to Him an evidence and effect *of* our being in Him; yet, on the other hand, faith does *unite* us to Christ, as is clear from His own words: “Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall *believe* on Me through their word; *that* they all *may be one*; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one of Us” (John 17:20, 21). Moreover, do we not read, “That Christ may dwell in your hearts *by faith*” (Eph. 3:17): it is faith which gives Him a real subsistence in the soul. Here, then, is the principal difference between what was before us in last month's article and the present aspect of our subject: in the forming of the vital union we were *passive*, but in the making of the saving union we are *active*. Here is the order: “That I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12).

Having been “apprehended” or “laid hold of” by Christ (through His quickening Spirit), we now apprehend Him. We cannot lay hold of Him, until He has first laid hold of us. But having been laid hold of by Christ, the soul now draws near to Him, joins itself to Him, appropriates Him by faith as its very own. And from *this* union there follows our justification, sanctification, preservation, and glorification. The *federal* union was necessary so that the demands of the law might be met by our Surety. The *vital* union was necessary so that a principle of life, grace, holiness, might be imparted to the soul, qualifying its recipient to perform spiritual acts and live a spiritual life. The *believing* union is necessary so that we may personally receive the salvation of God and have His receipt for it written in our own hearts.

Our believing in Christ is the sequel to His “I will betroth thee unto Me for ever” (Hosea 2:19), for faith is it which ties the marriage-knot between us, for there must be a personal consent on our part. In the Gospel

Christ offers Himself to us, and saving faith is our acceptance of Him. Saving faith, therefore, presupposes a turning from all others—from the seductions of the world and from trusting in my own righteousness—and yielding myself to Christ as my only Lord. It is a willingness to receive Christ on His own terms. It is turning our backs upon our idols, and saying with Ruth, “Entreat me not to leave Thee, or to return from following after Thee: for whither Thou goest, I will go; and where Thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and Thy God my God” (Ruth 1:16). Since a mediator is not a mediator of one, but requires the mutual consent of both parties, so there must be a personal acceptance of Christ as Mediator on our part. This makes the union *reciprocal*. As a woman, by her free consent, accepts a man for her husband, so the believer accepts Christ as his only Lord and Saviour.

This union also has been variously designated by the older writers—for alas! most modern writers seem to know little or nothing of this wondrous and blessed subject. Some of them call it the “voluntary” union, in order to distinguish it from the previous ones, which are quite involuntary on our part; and because this one is consummated by an act of our own wills. Some call it the “fiducial” or “believing” union, because it is brought about by faith, defining more definitely the nature of our voluntary act. Others call it the “conjugal” union, because it signifies our acceptance of Christ as our loving Lord or Husband. We have preferred to designate it the *saving* union, because a section of our readers need to have this aspect of the Truth pressed upon their notice; and also because it seems to express more than the other terms do.

The manner in which this saving union is brought about may be illustrated from the meaning of the names borne by the first three sons of Jacob. Reuben signifies “See! the Son.” It is as such the Gospel sets forth Christ, and its call is, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), for it is only as we are favored with spiritual and believing views of Him that spiritual blessings flow into the soul. Simeon signifies “Hearing,” and it is only as we hear the voice of Christ Himself speaking to us through the Gospel that peace comes to our conscience and joy fills the heart. Levi signifies “Joined”: as we see the Son responsively and hear Him believably, we become *connected with Him*. It was well put by Witsuis when he said, “Faith in its actings is the echo or repercussion of the Divine voice speaking to the soul.”

It is only the quickened soul which sees, hears, and receives Christ in a spiritual way. A distressed child's cleaving to and hanging upon its beloved father with entreaties and expectations of succor, are in consequence of a relation and union between them *prior* to those actings. So it is with the elect sinner: having been joined to Him by the Spirit, he now looks to Christ, lays hold of, embraces, and cleaves unto Him; and thus his saving union is effected. As a woman accepts the marriage proposal of her wooer by yielding herself and all her future interests into his care, so the believer is able to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have *committed unto Him* against that day” (2 Tim. 1:12). And again, “My beloved is mine, and I am his” (Song. 2:16)—His by my own consent and acceptance.

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?” (Rom. 8:35). Separation necessarily implies a joining together, for nothing can be “separated” but what was first united. Union with Christ is by the Spirit on His part, and by faith on our part; and both of them are made known *by love*, and this it is which makes the union indissoluble. The Spirit is given to us as the great proof and fruit of Christ's love to us, and He sheds

abroad God's love in our hearts. The faith which lays hold of Christ for salvation is a “faith which worketh *by love*” (Gal. 5:6), for it is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10). And nothing can unclasp those mutual embraces. The believer is now united to Christ by his affections, for he loves what Christ loves and hates what He hates. “A Christian is held by his heart rather than by his head” (Thos. Manton).

Vital union takes place at regeneration: in it we were entirely passive, and at the time thereof had no knowledge at all of it. Saving union takes place when the awakened sinner receives Christ as He is offered to him in the Gospel: in it he is active, and has a definite consciousness of what he is doing. As the Israelite of old gave a personal consent to God's gracious provision by laying his hand on the head of his sacrifice (Lev. 1:4), so the believer rests upon Christ as an all-sufficient Sacrifice for all his sins. Saving union takes place when the returning prodigal falls into the arms of his loving Father in Christ (Luke 15:20); when the fugitive, chased by the avenging law (Num. 35:11, 12) crosses the threshold of the City of Refuge (Heb. 6:18); when the sin-sick soul is able to stretch forth the hand of faith and receive healing from Christ by personal contact with Him (Mark 5:27-29).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

February, 1936

### **The Typical Canaan.**

The earthly Canaan was neither designed by God, nor from the first was it understood by His people to be the ultimate and proper inheritance which they were to occupy; things having been spoken and hoped for concerning it which plainly could not be realised within the bounds of Canaan.

The inheritance was one which could be enjoyed only by those who had become the children of the resurrection, themselves fully redeemed in soul and body from all the effects and consequences of sin,—made more glorious and blessed, indeed, than if they had never sinned, because constituted after the image of the heavenly Adam. And as the inheritance must correspond with the inheritor, it can only be man's original possession restored,—the earth redeemed from the curse which sin brought on it, and, like man himself, rendered exceedingly more beautiful and glorious than in its primeval state,—the fit abode of a Church made like, in all its members, to the Son of God.

The occupation of the earthly Canaan by the natural seed of Abraham was a type, and no more than a type, of this occupation by a redeemed Church of her destined inheritance of glory; and consequently everything concerning the entrance of the former on their temporary possession, was ordered so as to represent and foreshadow the things which belonged to the Church's establishment in her permanent possession. Hence, between the giving of the promise, which, though it did not terminate in the land of Canaan, yet included that, and through it prospectively exhibited the better inheritance, a series of important events intervened which are capable of being fully and properly examined in no other way than by means of their typical

bearing on the things hereafter to be disclosed respecting that better inheritance.

If we ask, why did the heirs of promise wander about so long as pilgrims, and withdraw to a foreign region before they were allowed to possess the land, and not rather, like a modern colony, quietly spread, without strife or bloodshed, over its surface, till the whole was possessed? Or, why were they suffered to fall under the dominion of a foreign power, from whose cruel oppression they needed to be redeemed, with terrible executions of judgment on the oppressor, before the possession could be theirs? Or why, before that event also, should they have been put under the discipline of law, having the covenant of Sinai, with its strict requirements and manifold obligations of service, superadded to the covenant of grace and promise? Or why, again, should their right to the inheritance itself have to be vindicated from a race of occupants who had been allowed for a time to keep possession of it, and whose multiplied abominations had so polluted it, that nothing short of their extermination could render it a fitting abode for the heirs of promise?

The full and satisfactory answer to all such questions can only be given by viewing the whole in connection with the better things on a higher dispensation,—as the first part of a plan which was to have its counterpart and issue in the glories of a new creation, and for the final results of which the Church needed to be prepared, by standing in similar relations, and passing through like experiences, in regard to an earthly inheritance. No doubt, with one and all of these were connected reasons and results for the time then present, amply sufficient to justify every step in the process, when considered simply by itself. But it is only when we take the whole as a glass, in which to see mirrored the far greater things which from the first were in prospect, that we can get a comprehensive view of the mind of God in appointing them, and know the purposes which He chiefly contemplated.

For example, the fact of Abraham and his immediate descendants being appointed to wander as pilgrims through the land of Canaan, without being allowed to occupy any part of it as their own possession, may be partly explained, though in that view it must appear somewhat capricious, by its being considered as a trial to their own faith, and an act of forbearance and mercy toward the original possessors, whose iniquities were not yet full. But if we thus find grounds of reason to explain why it *may* have been so ordered, when we come to look upon the things which happened to them, as designed to image other things which were afterwards to characterize the relation of God's people to a higher and better inheritance, we see it was even *necessary* that those transactions should have been so ordered, and that it would have been unsuitable for the heirs of promise, either entering at once on the possession, or living as pilgrims and expectants, anywhere, but within its borders. For thus alone could their experience fitly represent the case of God's people in Gospel times, who have not only to wait long for the redemption of the purchased possession, but while they wait, must walk up and down as pilgrims in the very region which they are hereafter to use as their own, when it shall have been delivered from the powers of evil who now hold it in bondage, and purged from their abominations. Hence, if they know aright their relation to the world as it now is, and their calling as the heirs of promise, they must sit loose to the things of earth, even as the patriarchs did to the lands of their sojourn,—must feel that it can not be the place of their rest so long as it is polluted, and that they must steadfastly look for the world to come as their proper home and possession.

And thus also the whole series of transactions which took place between the confirmation of the covenant

of promise with Jacob, and the actual possession of the land promised, and especially of course the things which concerned that greatest of all the transactions, the revelation of the Law from Sinai, is to be regarded as a delineation in the type, of the way and manner in which the heirs of God are to obtain the inheritance of the purchased possession. Meanwhile, apart from these later transactions, there are two important lessons which the Church may clearly gather from what appears in the first heirs of promise, and which she ought never to lose sight of:—First, that the inheritance, come when and how it may, is the free gift of God, bestowed by Him, as sovereign Lord and Proprietor, on those whom He calls to the fellowship of His grace. Second, that the hope of the inheritance must exist as an animating principle in their hearts, influencing all their procedure. Their spirit and character must be such as become those who are the expectants as well as heirs of that better country, which is an heavenly: nor can Christ ever be truly formed in the heart, until He be formed as “the hope of glory” (Patrick Fairbairn, 1865).

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### **A Prayer for the Nation.**

O Lord Jesus Christ, it is by Thee kings reign, and princes decree justice. Thou hast been very gracious to the people of this Isle. Thy Church in this land has long been Thy peculiar care. Many mercies Thou hast bestowed on us. Many deliverances Thou hast wrought for us, which ought to be remembered by us to Thy praise and glory. Thou hast sent and long continued Thy blessed and everlasting Gospel amongst us. Notwithstanding all our heinous, aggravated, and detestable crimes, which are more and more increasing, and which we as a nation groan under, yet such is Thy goodness, Thou dost spare us as a nation, nor doth Thy whole displeasure arise. Thou hast contended with us by various afflictive providences, yet in all Thou art saying, "How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? Mine heart is turned within Me, I will not execute the fierceness of Mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city." O Thy patience and forbearance towards us, as a nation, is beyond the very uttermost of our conceptions.

We would desire to be found with such as mourn and sigh for the abominations of the times. Pour out Thy Spirit on the inhabitants of the United Kingdom, as the Spirit of prayer and supplication. O turn from Thy fierce wrath towards us, that we perish not. O turn us from our national impieties, that they become not our national ruin. O consider us as a people on whom Thy name is called. Let it yet be manifest that Thou art in the midst of us; leave us not. O Thou hope of Israel, the Saviour thereof in time of trouble, exercise for Thy great name's sake, Thy mercy towards and upon the people of this land. Have respect to Thy Church

and people throughout Great Britain. Be with all Thy ministers and Truth-bearers. Many of them are under the cross: Lord, sanctify it unto them. Lord, do Thou bear them up, and powerfully sustain them.

Have respect unto Thy churches. They are in a low state, as it respects Gospel truth, order, and discipline. O revive them, and revive Thy work amongst them. Have respect to Thine both collectively and individually. Do Thou in Thy good pleasure unto Thy Zion, do Thou build up the walls of Jerusalem. Lord, remember Thine ancient people the Jews, and Thy promises concerning them. Hasten the time for the accomplishing of Thy good Word and grace respecting them. Look upon them, that they may look on Thee, and to Thee. Then they shall mourn as one that mourneth for an only son; then they shall be converted unto Thee. Lord, bring in with them the fullness of the Gentiles, and let both be one fold under Thee, the one shepherd, Jesus, the Conqueror. Turn sinners from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God. Grant this, O Lord Jesus Christ, for Thy mercy's sake. Amen.—S.E. Pierce, 1820.

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### **Help Sought.**

*“When my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (Psa. 61:2).* Yes, Lord! I would make this my morning, noon, and evening petition, that the great Glorifier of Jesus would gently lead me to Him who is a rock, and whose work is perfect. I know, Lord, in theory, and can even reason upon it in seasons of coolness, that Thy strength and Thy security never fail; the failure is in me and my unbelief. And it is only when I lose sight of Thee and Thy promises, that I am tossed about with doubts and misgivings. If Christ be out of sight, and thwarting dispensations arise, Oh! how soon is my poor forgetful heart ready to exclaim with the Church of old, “I said, my strength and my hope is perished from the Lord.” Then come on the reasonings of flesh and blood; and then arises the question whether my interest in the Lord Jesus and His salvation be sure. And then my poor heart goes forth, like the dove of Noah from the ark, having lost sight of Christ, and can find no resting-place for the sole of my foot. Oh! Lord the Spirit, in all such seasons, do Thou “lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.”

If Thou, blessed Leader of the Lord's distressed ones, wouldst be my Pilot when those storms are beating upon me, I should soon be blown upon the firm landing-place of Jesus' security. Oh! how should I ride out the storm even when the tempest was highest, as long as God the Holy Spirit enabled me to cast the anchor of faith upon this eternal Rock of Jesus. Oh! lead me then, Thou sovereign Lord, continually to an all-precious Christ. Open the door of communication, and keep it constantly open, between Christ and my soul. Faith will find a soft and quiet bed to sleep on, in the arms of Jesus, and no noise of wars shall break the soul's rest while reposing on Him; for so the promise runs: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace,

whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee.” Oh! then once again, I send up the earnest cry of my soul, let it be continually answered in mercy: “When my heart is overwhelmed, lead me to the Rock that is higher than I” (Robert Hawker, 1820).

“When darkness veils His lovely face,  
I'd rest on His unchanging grace;  
In every rough and stormy gale,  
My anchor holds within the veil.  
On Christ, the solid Rock, I'd stand;  
All other ground is sinking sand.”

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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March, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *7. Practical.*

What is Divine “salvation”? It is a rescuing or deliverance. From what? From the penalty, power, and presence of sin. How is it effected? By the joint-operations of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. May a real Christian regard himself as a “saved” person? In one sense, yes; in another sense, no. What do you mean? This, that God's salvation is presented to us in Scripture under three tenses, past, present, and future. There is a real sense in which every Christian has already been saved; there is a real sense in which every Christian is now being saved; and there is a real sense in which the salvation of every Christian on earth is yet future. Every Christian on earth has been saved from the penalty of sin, because Christ suffered it in his stead. But the sinful nature is left within, and though its complete dominion over us has been broken, it is still active and operative, and from its power and defiling effects we need saving.

Now the design of God in saving His people is to recover them from the Fall, to deliver them from its effects, to restore them to their state of happy fellowship with Him. It is true, blessedly true, that the redeemed gain far more through the last Adam than they lost by the first Adam; yet that in nowise conflicts with what we have said in the preceding sentence—the surpassing gain through Christ will come before us (D.V.) in the final article of this series. Before the Fall, we, in Adam, were in blissful communion with God: our nature was in tune with His, our joy lay in a ready responsiveness to His will. God and man were then of one accord, each finding delight in the other, yet the difference between the Creator and the creature being suitably sustained by the relation which was appointed—that of Sovereign

and subject.

Only as Sovereign and subject could God and man maintain their relative positions: there must be the exercise of *authority* on the part of the former, and of *submission* on the part of the latter: thereby there was a mutual indwelling of the one and the other—God ruling, man obeying. Such mutual indwelling and concord would daily become more intimate and confident: man increasingly perceiving the exceeding excellency of the commandments he was keeping (and of Him whose nature and will those commandments discovered), and God having increasing delight in the growing intelligence and love by which His subject obeyed. Thus at the beginning, holiness and happiness were made inseparable in the experience of the creature: holiness in walking in complete subjection to his Maker's revealed will, happiness in the joyous fellowship which this secured. Thus, too, were the relative positions and relations of Creator and creature perfectly sustained.

But alas, sin entered: entered by Eve's entertaining the Serpent's suggestion that God's restraints were tyrannical and irksome, and freedom from them being greatly to be desired; culminating in the overt act of rebellious disobedience. In consequence thereof a breach was made: harmony no longer existed between God and man; and happy fellowship which already obtained was broken. Henceforth, God and disobedient man must dwell apart; so Adam and Eve were driven out of paradise. Outside paradise *away from God*, were all their descendants born: “afar off” (Eph. 2:17) are the awful words written over the brow of all the first Adam's offspring, “*alienated from the life of God*” (Eph. 4:18). “Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. 51:5) is true of all alike; and because this is so “the wicked are *estranged from the womb*” (Psa. 58:3).

How this terrible situation is counteracted by God in the saving of His people we have endeavoured to show in the preceding articles of this series. Christ was made their Head, and their redemption was entrusted to Him: a union was established between them. First, a mystical union, when they were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Second, a federal union, whereby Christ should act as their Representative and Surety. Third, a vital union: by the incarnation, when He assumed their nature; and by regeneration, when they became partakers of His nature. Fourth, a saving union, when the soul (previously quickened) exercises faith, lays hold of and cleaves unto Christ. Then is it that the trusting sinner enters into the legal benefits which the Saviour's atonement secured for him: “By Him all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39). Saving union is the personal acceptance of Christ on His own terms: the penitent heart now rests upon Christ as an all-sufficient sacrifice for all his sins.

A new relation has been entered into by the believer which radically changes the course of his life, and which is to regulate all of his future conduct. He is no longer his own: he has given himself to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5); henceforth to please and honour Him must be his paramount concern. As the wedding, when the knot is tied, is but the beginning of married life, so the soul's surrender to and acceptance of Christ as Lord, is but the commencement of the Christian life. As the bride has turned her back upon all other lovers and solemnly vowed to be faithful to and obey her husband in all things, so the believer has disowned all other lords and promised to be in subjection to Christ alone (Isa. 26:13). As the purpose of marriage is the production of offspring, so we read, “ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be *married to another*, even to Him who is raised from the dead, that we should *bring forth fruit*

unto God” (Rom. 7:4).

Marriage, then, is a new beginning, the entering into a new order of things, the starting point *of a fresh life*. Before her marriage the woman, perhaps, was alone in the world; without father or brothers to defend her. She had to look after herself and plan her own career and course. But now she has taken upon her the marriage-yoke: she has given herself up to the one who loves her more dearly than any other creature, to the one who has won her heart, and who has now assumed the sole responsibility of being her provider and protector. It is now *for her good* to meekly submit to her husband's loving rule (1 Peter 3:1-6), to seek and promote his interests, to adorn the home he has made for her. His will is supreme; her good is his concern; and it is her welfare to act in submission to his wishes. Such is the ideal of married life: on the one hand, love's authority maintained by the head of the home; on the other, love's obedience joyously rendered by the dutiful and devoted wife—a shadowing forth of the relation which exists between the Redeemer and His redeemed, and the new order of things into which the saved soul enters.

Marriage is a means to an end, the making possible of wedded union, with its responsibilities and privileges, its duties, and joys. In like manner, saving union with Christ is a means to an end, the making possible of *the Christian life*, which is to *evidence* the new relationship that has been entered into. In other words, just as the vital union between Christ and the Christian (effected by the Spirit at the new birth) capacitates the soul for a saving union with Christ (accomplished by believing in Him), so that saving union, in turn, makes way for a *practical union* with Him. Thus, at the very outset, the Lord Jesus says to the sin-weary and conscience-burdened sinner who comes to Him for relief, “Take My *yoke* upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”! (Matt. 11:29). Now a “yoke” is that which harnesses two oxen, that they may walk and work *together*, and the Lord employed this figure to denote the relation now obtaining between Himself and His people.

In last month's article we pointed out that one of the main characteristics which distinguishes the saving from the vital union is, that in the latter the soul is *active*, whereas in the former the soul was *passive*. That is to say, in regeneration something was wrought *in* us, but in connection with salvation something is required *of* us, namely, our voluntary act of surrendering to, laying hold of, and cleaving unto Christ. So is it in connection with the *practical* union which exists between the Saviour and the saved: He does not place the yoke upon us, but says “Take My yoke upon you.” It is a voluntary and conscious act upon *our* part. The figure is a very plain one. Previously the ox roamed at large in the fields, but now it is no longer free to please itself—it is subservient to the will of its owner and master. The “yoke,” then, speaks of *subjection*, and thus it is with the believer: he has yielded himself to the claims of Christ, bowed to His Lordship, and entered into the place of submission, to be directed and used of Him.

But, alas, we now witness very little in actual realization of what we have said above, either in the natural or the spiritual sphere. The “yoke” is looked upon as something which is objectionable. Our lot is cast in a day when the spirit of lawlessness is rife on every hand, when any restraints are regarded as irksome and repellent. The equality of the sexes, the woman's rights, the repudiation of the man's headship, is being proclaimed in almost every quarter. The modern wife is “willing to be led” (providing the leading suits her whims), but refuses to be ruled; the idea of meekly *obeying* her husband is altogether foreign to her disposition and ideas. And, my readers, *that* is only an adumbration on the lower plane of what now

obtains so widely in the religious sphere. Multitudes profess to be resting on the finished work of Christ, but they *refuse* His “yoke”; they want to be saved from Hell, but they do not want His commandments; and the two cannot be separated.

In days gone by preachers frequently made it plain that “No cross, no crown”; alas, the pulpit is now pandering to a self-indulging generation. But God has not changed, nor has He lowered the claims of His holiness. Christ *must be followed* if ever we are to arrive at the Place where He has gone; and to “follow” Christ is to take upon us *His* “yoke”—to enter the same position of servitude and subjection which He did. Christ “pleased not Himself” (Rom. 15:3), and His imperative word is, “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Christ lived in full submission to the revealed will of God, and He left us an “example” that we should “follow his steps” (1 Peter 2:21). We must “suffer *with Him*” if ever we are to be “glorified *together*” (Rom. 8:17).

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). Here again is brought before us the *practical* union which exists between Christ and His people. If there is to be true fellowship there must first be harmony, oneness of accord in mind and will. All real communion is based upon union, and as the “*walk together*” intimates, it is not the vital or the saving union which is there in view, but the practical—the actual living out of the Christian life. And the Christian life (alas that the life of the average Christian falls so far short) is summed up in one word: “For to me to live *is Christ*” (Phil. 1:21). But Christ is holy, and He will not walk with us in any of the by-paths of unrighteousness: “For what fellowship hath Righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath Light with darkness? and what concord hath Christ with Belial?” (2 Cor. 6:14, 15).

Just as the ideal married life can only be maintained by the exercise of love's authority on the one hand and love's obedience on the other, so it is in the Christian life. “If ye love Me,” says Christ, “keep My commandments” (John 14:15). *Obedience* is not only the prime condition of practical union and communion with Christ, but it is of its very essence, for only thus is restored the relation which existed between God and His creature before sin entered—love's rule and love's submission. Before the Fall there was perfect complacency on both sides, Creator and creature dwelling in each other with unalloyed satisfaction, as the “very good” of Genesis 1:31 clearly denotes. Yet that mutual indwelling of God in man and man in God was *not procured* by man's keeping God's commandments, rather was that the channel of its outgoing and conscious realization; and only thus could they maintain their relative positions of Sovereign and servant.

We repeat what was said in an earlier paragraph: the grand design in salvation is to bring us back again into communion with God in Christ: not merely into a nominal communion, but into a real, intelligent, and joyous one. But “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?”—walk together in a way of holy and spiritual fellowship? No indeed, for *that* we must be of one mind and will with Christ Himself. For *that* we must receive His commandments into our hearts, be well-pleased with them, and live under their controlling influence. “God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; but if we *walk in the light*, as He is in the light, *we have fellowship* one with another” (1 John 1:5-7).

“And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord. Then tidings of these things came unto the ears of the church which was in Jerusalem: and they sent forth Barnabas, that he should go as far as Antioch. Who, when he came, and had seen the grace of God, was glad, and exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (Acts 11:21-23). Having “*turned unto* the Lord” these young converts were now exhorted to “*cleave unto* the Lord”: that is, since a saving union with Christ had been effected, they were bidden to “with purpose of heart” maintain a practical union and communion with Him. To “cleave unto the Lord” is to live a life of dependence upon and devotedness unto Him: having “come” to Him, they are now to diligently “follow” Him, or “to walk even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Only by the continued exercise of faith, a bold profession of His name, and obedience to His commands, can we “follow on to know the Lord” (Hosea. 6:3).

*Practical* union with Christ consists in the exercise of *obedience*, and that is impossible till there has been a saving union. The only kind of obedience which is acceptable to God is evangelical obedience, that is “the obedience *of faith*” (Rom. 16:26)—an obedience which springs from faith, which is animated by faith. There can be no true obedience before faith, for “without faith it is impossible to please God” (Heb. 11:6), and therefore without faith it is impossible to obey Him. Faith is (from our side) the bond of union which unites with Christ, and obedience is the fruit of that believing union: see Romans 7:4 again—all “fruit” before marriage is bastard. Our persons must first be accepted in Christ before our services can be pleasing to God. All the good works recorded in Hebrews 11 were the fruits or obedience of faith.

Though inseparably connected, faith and obedience are quite distinct. Faith is the principle, obedience is the product; faith is the cause, obedience is the effect; faith is the root, obedience is the fruit. By faith we receive and own Christ as our rightful Lord; by obedience we regulate our conduct according to His commands. By faith a saving union with Christ is effected, by obedience a practical union with Him is maintained. “He that hath My commandments and *keepeth* them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will manifest Myself to him” (John 14:21): Christ only *manifests* Himself in the intimacies of His love to those who are treading the path of obedience. A striking illustration of this is seen by a comparison of Genesis 18 and 19: “*the LORD* appeared unto” Abraham (Gen. 18:1) accompanied by two angels, manifesting Himself in human form. But only the “two angels” came to Lot (Gen. 19:1), who was not walking in practical union with the Lord. O how much we miss by allowing self-will to dominate and regulate us.

There is another spiritual grace which is inseparably connected with faith: “Faith which *worketh by love*” (Gal. 5:6). The reality and sincerity of faith is only evidenced by the presence and operations of love. Faith is the hand which works, but love is the power that moves it. Faith is the feet walking, but love is the energy that stirs them into action; hence we find the Psalmist declaring, “I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt *enlarge my heart*” (119:32). Now as there can be no saving union with Christ without faith, so there can be no practical union with Him without love. Love must be answered by love: “My son, give Me thine heart” (Prov. 23:26) is our loving Lord's call. Love is the mainspring in the soul which moves every faculty and grace, and therefore is love denominated “the *fulfilling of the law*” (Rom. 13:10).

True repentance also flows from love. The warmer our love to God, the stronger will be our hatred of sin,

as contrary to Him. The sweeter the fellowship of Christ to our hearts, the more bitter the realization of our offenses against Him. This is that “*godly* sorrow” which worketh repentance to salvation “not to be repented of” (2 Cor. 7:10): it is a sorrow issuing from a heart that truly loves the Lord, and which is grieved for having displeased and dishonoured Him. Love mourns the breaking of fellowship and the hiding of the Lord's countenance. Then it is that the agonized soul cries, “The Enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead. Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate. I remember the days of old . . . I stretch forth my hands unto Thee: my soul thirsteth after Thee, as a thirsty land. Selah. Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not Thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit” (Psa. 143:3-7).

In what has been said above we have sought to indicate the relation between the saving and the practical union between the believer and Christ; what practical union actually consists of, and how it is to be restored when broken—by true repentance and humble confession. As this branch of our subject is so much neglected today, as it so intimately concerns the glory of Christ, and the wellbeing of our souls, a further article thereon seems called for.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1936

### **Divine Comfort.**

Below is the editor's first sermon in Glasgow; preached December 22, 1935, on what the world calls "Christmas Sunday."

The Lord has given me two texts for tonight: the second one I will announce near the end. The first is "Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). Whatever bearing the Beatitudes may yet have upon a future godly remnant of the Jews, their present application is obvious and simple: they supply a Divine description of those who are the subjects and citizens of Christ's spiritual kingdom. To me it appears the Beatitudes are *eight* in number (the last being a double one), which speaks of *a new beginning*, for only those *renewed* by the Holy Spirit possess the character here delineated. Thus I regard these Beatitudes as supplying us with a moral portrait of those who have been born again, and with its several features we should honestly and diligently compare our hearts and lives. It is on the second of them I feel led to speak tonight.

"Blessed are they that *mourn*: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). Now it is obvious that Christ does not here refer to *every* species of "mourning." There are thousands of mourners in the world tonight who are not included within our text; those mourning over blighted hopes, over financial reverses, over the loss of loved ones. But, alas, so far from many of them coming beneath this Divine benediction, they are under God's condemnation; nor is there any promise or guarantee that they shall ever be Divinely "comforted." There are three kinds of "mourning" referred to in the Scriptures: a *natural*, such as I have just described;

a *sinful*, which is disconsolate and inordinate grief, refusing to be comforted, or a hopeless remorse like that of Judas; and a *gracious*, a “godly sorrow,” of which the Holy Spirit is the Author.

The “mourning” of our text is a *spiritual* one. The previous verse indicates the line of thought here: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.” Yes, “blessed are the poor,” not the poor in purse, but the poor in heart: those who realise themselves to be spiritual bankrupts in themselves, paupers before God. That felt poverty of spirit is the very opposite of the Laodiceanism which is so rife today, that self-complacency which says “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing.” So it is spiritual mourning here. Furthermore, *these* “mourners” Christ pronounced “blessed.” They are so because the Spirit of God has wrought a work of grace in them, and hence they have been awakened to see and feel their lost condition. They are “blessed” because God does not leave them at that point: “they shall be comforted.”

Now it has to be acknowledged that my text brings before us an aspect of Truth which is not very popular today. In this age people had much rather hear about that which is bright and cheerful, than what is somber and doleful. The Gospel is far more acceptable than the Law. People had rather hear about Christ than that which, under the Spirit, is calculated to reveal to them their deep need of Christ. Nevertheless our text raises a most important question, which I feel led to press on your hearts, and on my own: Do *I* really belong to the class which Christ here pronounces “Blessed,” for observe it is a *class*, as the plural pronoun denotes: not “blessed is he,” but “*they* that mourn.”

But why raise such a question here? Are not the majority of *us* professing Christians? Do we not believe firmly that the Scriptures are the Word of God? are we not “resting on the finished work of Christ”? are we not rejoicing in the assurance that our sins are forgiven? Ah, may I remind you of the Lord's parable of the sower. Of the stony-ground hearer He declared, “he received the Word,” and received it “with *joy*”; yet, of him Christ solemnly affirmed “yet hath he not root in himself” (Matt. 13:21). And it is greatly to be feared there are many such today in orthodox circles of Christendom: the product of a superficial “evangelism,” which is so eager to secure quick and visible “results”—their conversion *was not* preceded by conviction and contrition.

There is a class which come to the great Physician, though they do not feel themselves to be desperately and deadly sick. They have a certain kind of “faith”—I dare not call it a saving faith—but it is not preceded by repentance! They apparently feed on the Lamb, but there is no “bitter herbs” (Exo. 12:8). There is a “joy,” but it is not one which follows a deep sorrow. There is a “comfort” experienced, yet there is no previous “mourning.” But my dear friends, what is *the Divine order*? Is there not a stripping before clothing, a wounding before healing, an abasing before exalting? Must not the ground of the hard heart be *plowed* before the good Seed can enter and take root? They that are whole—in their own estimation and feelings—need not a physician, but they that are sick. How was it with Israel in Egypt—the greatest of the Old Testament types of salvation. Were not the Hebrews sorely afflicted, groaning and crying out in deep distress, *before* God sent them a deliverer?

Turn with me now to the following Scriptures, and note carefully the *order of Truth* presented in them. “Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning” (Psa. 30:5). “They that sow in tears

shall reap in joy” (Psa. 126:5). “The heart knoweth his own bitterness; and a stranger doth not intermeddle with his joy” (Prov. 14:10). “To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness” (Isa. 61:3). The same order is also observable in the New Testament: “As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing” (2 Cor. 6:10). “Having received the Word *in much affliction* (did you so “receive” it?), with joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6). “Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms” (James 5:13). So it is in our text: the “mourning” *precedes* the “comfort.” Therefore I press upon you, and upon myself, am I among this class of spiritual “mourners”?

The pressing importance of this question appears when we thoughtfully observe that Christ pronounces those in this class “blessed”: the Divine benediction rests upon them. Do you know *what* it is which rests upon those who *do not* belong to this class? The Divine *condemnation*! There is no middle ground, no third class: it is one or the other. You may remember that after Israel crossed the Jordan and entered the land of Canaan, certain ones were required to stand upon mount Gerizim and pronounce upon the obedient the *blessings* of God; while others were to stand upon mount Ebal and pronounce upon the disobedient the *curses* of God (Deut. 27:12, 13). So again in Matthew 25, unto the sheep Christ says, “Come ye *blessed* of My Father” (v. 34); whereas to the goats He says, “Depart from Me ye *cursed*” (v. 41). If, then, we really value our souls, if we are truly concerned as to where we shall spend eternity, it behooves us to seriously examine our hearts and make sure of *which class we belong to*.

“Blessed are they that *mourn*.” The first reference is to that initial “mourning” which ever precedes a genuine conversion. Do not misunderstand me: I am not arguing for any stereotyped experience, for any definitely defined *depth* of sorrow or any *protracted* season of grief. But I do insist (as Scripture does) that repentance *precedes* forgiveness; that there must be a real sense of sin *before* the Remedy for it will even be desired. Thousands acknowledge they are sinners, who have never *mourned* over the fact. Take the woman of Luke 7, who washed the Saviour's feet with her tears: have you ever shed any over *your* sins? Take the prodigal in Luke 15: *before* he left the far country he said, “I will arise and go to my Father, and will say unto Him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before Thee, and am no more worthy to be called Thy son” (vv. 18, 19): ah, where shall we find those today with this sense of their sinnership? Take the publican of Luke 18: why did he “smite upon his *breast*” and say “God be merciful to me, a sinner”? (v. 13). Because he felt the plague of his own heart. So of the three thousand converted on the day of Pentecost: they were “pricked in the heart, and cried out”!

This “mourning” springs from a sense of sin, from a tender conscience, from a broken heart. It is a godly sorrow over rebellion against God and hostility to His will. In some cases it is a grief over the very morality in which the heart has trusted, over the self-righteousness which has caused such complacency. This “mourning” is the agonizing realisation that it was *my* sins which nailed to the cross the Lord of Glory. When Israel shall see Christ “they shall *mourn* for Him” (Zech. 12:10). So it is now when, by the power of the Spirit, the contrite sinner sees Christ by faith. And it is *such* tears and groans which prepare the heart to truly welcome and receive the “balm of Gilead,” the comfort of the Gospel.

But our text is by no means to be confined unto the initial experience of conviction and contrition, for observe the tense of the verb: it is not “have mourned,” but “mourn”—a present and continual experience.

The Christian himself has much to *mourn* over. The sins which he now commits—both of omission and commission are a sense of daily grief to him, or should be so, and *will be* if his conscience is tender. An ever-deepening discovery of the depravity of his nature, the plague of his heart, the sea of corruption within, ever polluting all that he does, deeply exercises him. Consciousness of the surgings of unbelief, the swellings of pride, the coldness of his love, and his paucity of fruit, make him cry “O wretched man that I am.” An humbling recollection of past offences: “wherefore remember, that ye being *in time past*” (Eph. 2:11).

Yes, “Ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves *groan* within ourselves” (Rom. 8:23). Does not the Christian groan when under the disciplining rod of the Father: “No chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but *grievous*” (Heb. 12:11). And is he not deeply pained by the awful dishonour now done to the Lord Jesus on every side. But blessed be God it is written, “Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that *sigh and that cry* for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4). So too there is a sympathetic mourning over the sorrows of others: “Weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15).

And these holy mourners Christ pronounced “Blessed.” This is at complete variance with the world's ideas. In all ages and climes men have deemed the prosperous and the light-hearted the happy ones, but He who spake as never man spake, declared “Blessed are the poor in spirit . . . Blessed are they that mourn.” And *why* are these mourners “blessed”? First, because such mourning proves they are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who maketh intercession for them “with *groanings* which cannot be uttered.” Second, because this holy mourning brings them into fellowship with the sufferings of Christ: when here He was “a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” Third, because they shall be Divinely “comforted.”

Learn, then, from what has been before us, the folly of measuring the *helpfulness* of the books we read or the preaching we hear by the degree of peace and joy which it imparts to our hearts. Ah, the truth is, dear friends, that sometimes the address which is of most help and blessing, is the one which causes us to get alone with God and weep before Him! Our souls are by no means always in a fit condition to be regaled by the sweets of the Gospel. When we have flirted with the world, or indulged the lusts of the flesh, the *Holy Spirit* gives us a rebuke or admonition!

“For they shall be *comforted*.” There is a threefold reference here. First, to the initial “comfort” which immediately follows a sound conversion (one that is preceded by conviction and contrition), namely, the removal of that conscious guilt which lies as an intolerable load on the conscience. Then it is Christ says, “Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Note that there again we have presupposed one who feels sin to be a “burden” *before* he comes to Christ—that is what propels him to Christ for relief. Then it is Christ gives rest to the sin-weary heart. Then it is the Holy Spirit applies the comfort of the Gospel to the stricken soul: it is the realisation of free and full forgiveness by the blood of Christ.

Second, there is continual “comforting” of the “mourning” saint by the Holy spirit, who is the Comforter. The one who mourns over his departures from Christ is comforted by the assurance that “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).

The one who mourns under the chastening rod of God is comforted by the promise, “afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Heb. 12:11). The one who mourns over the awful dishonour done to his Lord in the religious world, is comforted by the fact that Satan's time is now short, and soon Christ will bruise him beneath His feet.

Third, the final “comfort” is when we leave this world and have done with sin forever. Then shall “sorrow and sighing flee away.” To the rich man in Hell, Abraham said of the one who had begged at the gate, “Now he is *comforted*” (Luke 16:25). The best wine is reserved for the last. The “comfort” of Heaven will more than compensate for all the “mourning” of earth.

The second text is “Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:25). What a solemn commentary are these words of the Lord on the festivities of *this* week: indulging the lusts of the flesh under the pretence of keeping Christ-mass! O the unholy mirth and jollification of the world, with the sacred name of Christ tacked over it all! It is nothing but paganism perpetuated by Rome: alas that so many professing Christians should adopt it. “A merry Christmas”—carnal indulgence over the memory of the unwanted Son of God lying in a manger!

“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” This is a joy that is fleshly, the pleasures of sin for a season: unto such applies “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (James 4:9). There is the less need for me to speak at length on this second text, because it enunciates identically the same truth as the first, only it gives the reverse side. “Woe unto you that laugh now.” I need hardly say that the “laughter” here is not to be confined to the exercise of the facial muscles: it is a *state of heart* which the Lord is here reprehending. It is an indifference to God's demands, an unconcern about the claims of Christ, a thinking only about enjoying the things of time and sense. Eternal concerns are deliberately shelved: the paramount interests of the soul are ignored. Sin is regarded lightly: “There is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18).

“Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep.” Such “laugh” (though they may be too well bred to do so outwardly) at the warnings of Christian friends, considering them as “kill-joys” or fanatics. They “laugh” at the solemn truth of eternal punishment, supposing it to be a bogey with which to frighten ignorant people. And so they go giddily and gaily along the broad road which leadeth to destruction—“laughing” while hastening to a hopeless eternity! How solemn is that word of God's “I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh” (Prov. 1:26)!

Now dear friends, I have sought to hold up these texts as a mirror in which we may see ourselves, and ascertain *to which* of the two classes we belong. The class of spiritual “mourners” Christ declares *blessed*: the class of carnal “laughers,” is the one upon which He pronounces His solemn *woe*. The Lord graciously grant that in HIS light, we may “see light,” and clearly perceive to which of these diverse companies *we* really belong.—A.W.P.

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March, 1936

### **Ministerial Address to the Unconverted.**

Sir,—In a late conversation you desired my thoughts concerning a Scriptural and consistent manner of addressing the consciences of unawakened sinners in the course of your ministry. It is a point on which many eminent ministers have been, and are not a little divided; and it therefore becomes me to propose my sentiments with modesty and caution, so far as I am constrained to differ from any, from whom, in general, I would be glad to learn.

Some think that it is sufficient to preach the great truths of the Word of God in their hearing; to set forth the utterly ruined and helpless state of fallen man by nature, and the appointed method of salvation by grace, through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and then to leave the application entirely to the agency of the Holy Spirit, who alone can enlighten the dark understandings of sinners, and enable them to receive, in a due measure, the doctrines of either the Law or the Gospel. And they apprehend that all exhortations, arguments, and motives, addressed to those who are supposed to be still under the influence of a carnal mind, are inconsistent with the principles of free grace, and the acknowledged inability of such persons to perform any spiritual acts; and that, therefore, the preachers who, avowing the doctrines of free grace, do, notwithstanding, plead and expostulate with sinners, usually contradict themselves, and retract in their application what they had laboured to establish in the course of their sermon.

There are others, who, though they would be extremely unwilling to derogate from the free grace and sovereign power of God in the great work of conversion, or in the least degree encourage the mistaken

notion which every unconverted person has of his own power; yet think it their duty to deal with sinners as rational and moral agents; and as such, besides declaring the counsel of God in a doctrinal way, *to warn them*, by His tender mercies, that they receive not the grace of God in a preached Gospel in vain. Nor can it be denied but that some of them, when deeply affected with the worth of souls, and the awful importance of eternal things, have sometimes, in the warmth of their hearts, dropped unguarded expressions, and such as have been justly liable to exception.

If we were to decide to which of these different methods of preaching the preference is due, by the discernible effects of each, it will, perhaps, appear in fact, without making any invidious comparisons, that those ministers whom the Lord has honoured with the greatest success in awakening and converting sinners, have generally been led to adopt the more popular way of exhortation or address; while they who have been studiously careful to avoid any direct application to sinners, as unnecessary and improper, if they have not been altogether without seals to their ministry, yet their labours have been more owned in building up those who have already received the knowledge of the truth, than adding to their number. Now, as “he that winneth souls is wise,” and as every faithful labourer has a warm desire of being instrumental in raising the dead in sin to a life of righteousness, this seems at least a presumptive argument in favour of those who, besides stating the doctrines of the Gospel, endeavour, by earnest persuasions and expostulations, to impress them upon the hearts of their hearers, and intreat and warn them to consider “How they shall escape, if they neglect so great salvation.” For it is not easy to conceive that the Lord should most signally bear testimony in favour of that mode of preaching which is least consistent with the Truth, and with itself.

But not to insist on this, nor to rest the cause on the authority or examples of men, the best of whom are imperfect and fallible, let us consult the Scriptures, which, as they furnish us with the whole subject-matter of our ministry, so they afford us perfect precepts and patterns for its due and orderly dispensation. With respect to the subject of our inquiry, the examples of our Lord Christ, and of His authorised ministers, the Apostles, are both *our rule and our warrant*. The Lord Jesus was the great Preacher of free grace, “who spake as never man spake”; and His ministry, while it provided relief for the weary and heavy-laden, was eminently designed to stain the pride of all human glory. He knew what was in man, and declared that none would come unto Him, unless drawn and taught of God: John 6:44-46. And yet He often speaks to sinners in terms, which, if they were not known to be *His*, might perhaps, be censured as inconsistent and legal: John 6:27, Luke 13:24-27, John 12:35. It appears, both from the context and the tenor of these passages, that they were immediately spoken not of His disciples, but to the multitude. The Apostles copied from their Lord: they taught that we have no sufficiency of ourselves, even to think a good thought, and that “it is not of him that willeth or of him that runneth, but of God who showeth mercy”; yet they plainly call upon sinners (and that *before* they had given evident signs that they were pricked in the heart as Acts 2:21) to “repent” and turn from their vanities to the living God: Acts 3:19, 14:15, 17:30. Peter's advice to Simon Magus is very full and express to this point: for though he perceived him to be “in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity,” he *exhorted* him “to repent, and to pray, if perhaps the thought of his heart might be forgiven.” It may be presumed that we cannot have stronger evidence, that any of our readers are in a carnal and unconverted state, than Peter had in the case of Simon Magus; and therefore there seems no sufficient reason why we should hesitate to follow the Apostle's example.

You have been told that repentance and faith are spiritual acts, for the performance of which a principle of spiritual life is absolutely necessary; and that therefore, to exhort an unregenerate sinner to repent or believe, must be as vain and fruitless as to call a dead person out of his grave. To this it may be answered that we might cheerfully and confidently undertake even to call the dead out of their graves, if we had the command and promise to warrant the attempt; for then we might expect His power would accompany our word. The vision of Ezekiel in chapter 37 may be fitly accommodated to illustrate both the difficulties and the encouragement of a Gospel ministry. The deplorable state of many of our hearers may often remind us of the Lord's question to the Prophet, "Can these dry bones live?" Our response, like that of the Prophet's is entirely in the sovereignty, grace, and power of the Lord: "O Lord, Thou knowest, impossible as it is to us, it is easy for Thee to raise them unto life; therefore *we renounce our own reasonings*, and though we see that they are dead, we call upon them at Thy bidding, as if they were alive, and say, O ye dry bones, hear the Word of the Lord! The means is our part, the work is Thine, and to Thee be all the praise." The dry bones could not hear the Prophet; but while he spoke, the Lord caused breath to enter into them, and they lived, but the word was spoken to them *considered as dry and dead*.

It is true the Lord can, and I hope He often does, make that preaching effectual to the conversion of sinners, wherein little is said expressly *to them*, only the truths of the Gospel being declared in their hearing; but He who knows the frame of the human heart, has provided us with a variety of topics which have a moral suitableness to engage the faculties, affections, and consciences of sinners, so far at least as to leave them condemned if they persist in their sins, and by which He often effects the purposes of His grace; though none of the means of grace by which He ordinarily works, can produce a real change in the heart, unless they are accompanied with the efficacious power of His Spirit. Should we admit that an unconverted person is not a proper subject of ministerial exhortation, because he has no power in himself to comply, the just consequence of this position would, perhaps, *extend too far*, even to prove the impropriety of *all* exhortation universally: for when we invite the weary and heavy laden to come to Christ, that they may find rest; when we call upon backsliders to remember from whence they are fallen, "to repent and do their first works"; yea, when we exhort believers "to walk worthy of God, who has called them to His kingdom and glory": in each of these cases we press them to acts for which *they* have *no* inherent power of their own; and unless the Lord the Spirit is pleased to apply the Word to their hearts, we do but speak to the air; and our endeavours can have no more effect in these instances than if we were to say to a dead body "arise, and walk." For an exertion of Divine power is no less necessary to the healing of a wounded conscience, than the breaking of a hard heart; and only He who has begun the good work of grace, is able either to revive or to maintain it.

Though sinners are destitute of spiritual life, they are not therefore mere machines. They have a power to do many things, which they may be called upon to exert. They are capable of considering their ways; they know they are mortal; and the bulk of them are persuaded in their consciences that after death there is an appointed judgment. They are not under an inevitable necessity of living in known and gross sins; that they do so, is not for want of power, but for want of will. The most profane swearer can refrain from his oaths, while in the presence of a person whom he fears, and to whom he knows it would be displeasing. Let a drunkard see poison put into his liquor, and it may stand by him untasted from morning till night. And many would be deterred from sins to which they are greatly addicted, by the presence of a child, though they have no fear of God before their eyes. They have a power likewise of attending upon the

means of grace; and though the Lord only can give them true faith and evangelical repentance, there seems no impropriety to invite them, upon the ground of the Gospel-promises, to seek to Him who is exalted to bestow these blessings, and who is able to do for them that which they cannot do for themselves, and who has said “him that cometh unto Me, I will in nowise cast out.” Perhaps it will not be easily proved that intreaties, arguments, warnings, formed upon these general principles, which are in the main agreeable and adequate to the remaining light of natural conscience, are at all inconsistent with those doctrines which ascribe the whole of a sinner's salvation from first to last, to the free sovereign grace of God.

We should, undoubtedly, endeavour to maintain a consistency in our preaching; but unless we keep the plan and manner of Scriptures constantly in view, and attend to every part of it, a design of “consistency” may fetter our sentiments, and greatly *preclude* our usefulness. We need not wish to be more “consistent” *than the inspired writers*, nor be afraid of speaking as *they* have spoken before us! We may easily perplex ourselves and our hearers *by nice reasonings* on the nature of human liberty, and the Divine agency on the hearts of men; but such disquisitions *are better avoided*. We shall, perhaps, never have full satisfaction on these subjects till we arrive in the world of Light. In the meantime, the path of duty, the good old way, lies plain before us. If when you are in the pulpit, the Lord favours you with a lively sense of the greatness of the trust, and the worth of the souls committed to your charge, and fills your heart with His constraining love, many little curious distinctions, which amuse you at other times, will be forgotten. Your soul will go forth with your words; and while your bowels yearn over poor sinners, you will not hesitate a moment, whether you ought to warn them of their danger or not. That great champion of free grace, John Owen, has a very solemn address to sinners, the running title to which is, “Exhortations unto believing.” It is in his Exposition of the 130th Psalm, which I recommend to your attentive consideration. I am etc., John Newton, 1770.

N.B. We heartily commend the above to the thoughtful and prayerful perusal of those of our ministerial brethren who are inclined to be hyper-Calvinistic. The above was written by one who was a marvelous trophy of sovereign grace, deeply taught in Divine things, wondrously helped in maintaining the *balance* of truth, and mightily used in the blessing of souls. Personally, we have often lamented the fact that Mr. Gadsby, and later, Mr. Philpot, followed (what we believe was the error of ) William Huntington, instead of adhering to that path which had been almost uniformly trodden by the Reformers and Puritans. Had they done so, we believe that the Strict and Particular Baptist churches would be in a far healthier and livelier spiritual state than they are now in.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1936

### **Love to All the Saints.**

How should I regard Christians who “follow not with us?” a young believer may ask. Well, how would that Great-Heart, the Apostle Paul, have regarded them? Are they not children of God? Hearts may agree although heads differ, and God sees grace where we see none. If you think that these people have less light than you, their need is a claim upon your help; and, believe it or not, they can teach *you* something! Be on your guard against viewing them with suspicion or contempt. You are made of exactly the same flesh and blood as they are, and the same grace is at work in them as in you. God loves persons rather than places.

You may not find every believer very approachable; but try to cultivate spiritual fellowship with *all* God's people by dwelling upon the big things that all true Christians hold in common. In this way you will help to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Be a living link of fellowship between believers. Sympathy is better than criticism. Disbelieve those who have no faith in their fellow-Christians. Do not take the world's side against God's people.

Each group or school of thought has its own emphasis, and sometimes its own phraseology. Do not attach too much importance to pious phrase; the same truth can be expressed in different ways. We should learn to welcome *all* the truth, through whatever channel it may come to us. And the gifts of Christ are for *all* His people. (E. Adams).

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *7. Practical.*

Our practical union and communion with Christ grows out of our having cleaved to Him for salvation. A union to Christ by faith is designed by God to issue in a practical conformity to the image of His Son. We are “delivered out of the hand of our enemies” (sin, Satan, the world, the curse of the law, the wrath of God) in order that we might “serve (be in subjection to and obey) Him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life” (Luke 1:74, 75). God does not save us in order that we may henceforth indulge in the lusts of the flesh without fear of fatal consequences; but He brings us to Christ in order that we should take His “yoke” upon us, and live for His pleasure and glory. Our initial salvation is but a means to an end: to melt our hard hearts, that out of gratitude we may gladly render Him love's obedience, and be the monuments and witnesses of His transforming power.

The union which exists between the Redeemer and the redeemed is not a simple, but a compound one: that which binds us to Him is not a single strand, but made up of several combined together. In a previous article we likened the bond of union between the believer and Christ to a golden chain, possessing a number of distinct links, yet inseparably welded together. That chain is let down all the way from God Himself, through Christ, to each of His people on earth. As the hand of faith lays hold of each separate link, the one immediately above it is revealed in turn. In this series of articles we have followed that chain, link by link, as it descended from above; but in our actual experience, *we*, of necessity, apprehend them in their inverse order—grasping first the lowest link and then ascending higher. From the position we now

occupy, we can only discern the higher links by means of the lower. Let us try to make this fact yet plainer.

It is only by means of our *practical* union with Christ that we have personal evidence of our *saving* union with Him—if I am not in personal subjection to Him, walking with Him in the path of obedience to God's revealed will, then I have no Scriptural warrant for supposing that *my* sins have been pardoned. Again; it is only by means of our saving union with Christ that we obtain evidence of our vital oneness with Him—if I have not forsaken all other claimants to my heart, surrendered to Christ's Lordship, and put my whole trust in His sacrifice for my acceptance with God, then I have no Scriptural warrant to conclude that I have ever been born again. Once more; it is only by means of our vital union with Christ that we obtain evidence of our federal and mystical oneness with Him—if I cannot clearly perceive (by means of new sensibilities, new desires, new purposes and efforts) that I have passed from death unto life spiritually, then I have no Scriptural warrant to believe that Christ acted as *my* Surety.

From what has just been pointed out it should be quite evident that we are now treating of *the most important aspect* of our many-sided subject—the most important so far as the peace of our souls is concerned, and that we were fully justified in devoting a further article to its specific consideration. To be deceived at *this* point is a most serious thing, for it is very liable to have *fatal* consequences. If it is only by means of *practical* union and communion with Christ that I can rightly determine whether or not I have any *saving* union with Him, then how it behooves me to seriously and carefully inquire in to my present *practical relations* to the Lord Jesus, and make sure whether I have really taken His yoke upon me, whether I am truly in subjection to His will and am being conformed to His holy image; whether it is my natural inclinations or His exhortations which are really regulating my daily life.

Now taking them in their deepest meaning and fullest scope, all the exhortations of Christ (expressing His claims upon us and His will for us) may be summed up in two words: “*Come* unto Me” and “Abide in Me.” The first of these calls is what we have to comply with in order to become *savingly* united to Christ; the second is what we must heed if *practical* union with Him is to be secured and maintained. As to what is signified and included in the sinner's “coming to” Christ, we sought to show in a series of articles thereon in the 1933 “Studies.” To “come to” Christ implies the turning of our backs upon all that is opposed to Him, the abandoning of every idol and all other dependencies, the heart going out to Him in full surrender and trustful confidence. To “come to” Christ denotes the turning of the whole soul to a whole Christ, as Prophet, Priest, and King: it is the mind, heart, and will being supernaturally drawn to Him so as to love, trust and serve Him.

“Coming to” Christ is a far, far different thing from raising your hand to be prayed for, or coming forward and taking the evangelist's hand, or signing some “decision” card, or uniting with some “church,” or any other of the “many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29) of men. Before any one will or can truly come to Christ, the understanding must be supernaturally enlightened, the heart must be supernaturally changed, the stubborn will must be supernaturally broken. The things of this world have the first place in the affections of the natural man: the pleasing of self is his paramount concern. Christ is too holy to suit the natural man's love of sin; His claims are too exacting to please his selfish heart; His terms of discipleship (Luke 14:26, 27) too severe to suit his fleshly ways. The unregenerate *will not* submit to His Lordship.

Christ must be crowned Lord of all, or He will not be Lord at all. He will brook no rival. There must be the complete heart-renunciation of all that stands in competition with Him: whatever pertains to the flesh must be renounced. The “cross” is the badge of Christian discipleship: not a golden one worn on the body, but the principle of self-denial and self-sacrifice controlling the heart. We must come to Christ as Prophet, to be instructed by Him; as Priest, whose atonement and intercession are to be relied upon; as King, to be ruled by Him. Coming to Christ is a going out of self, so as no longer to rest on anything in self. It is the will bowing to His Lordship, accepting His yoke, taking up the cross, and following Him without reserve. O how very few really do this! To the great majority Christ has to say “*Ye will not come to Me that ye might have life*” (John 5:40).

Now as a Scriptural “coming to Christ” is a vastly different thing from how it is represented from the majority of church-pulpits and mission-platforms today, so “Serving Christ” is something entirely different from the popular idea which now prevails. That we are saved to serve is a truth writ large in the Word: “Ye turned to God from idols, to *serve* the living and true God” (1 Thess. 1:9). But serving God *does not mean* that, primarily and mainly, we are called upon to be “*personal* workers” and “soul winners”: we are to serve *Christ*, not our fellows. What is a *servant*? He is one that is in subjection to a master: he is one who sinks his own desires and ideas, and carries out the orders of the one who employs him. A “servant” is one who is in the place of subjection, of obedience, regulating his conduct according to the will of another. And *that* is what Christian service consists of: submitting to the authority of Christ, doing His bidding, walking according to His commandments, seeking to please Him in all things—whether He appoints us to plow the ground, mine coal, scrub floors, or preach the Word.

Now *that* is exactly what *practical union* with Christ consists of: it is being taken into His blessed *service*: walking together with Him in the path of obedience to God, with our hearts, minds and wills one with His. Practical union with Christ is but the *wearing of* the yoke which we *took upon us* when we came to Him for salvation. As the married life is the actual carrying out of the solemn vows by the husband and wife at the time of their wedded union, so the Christian life is the maintenance of that relationship which was entered into by the soul when it surrendered to the claims of Christ. At conversion we passed through the “strait gate” of full surrender to Christ, henceforth to tread the “narrow way” that leadeth unto Life for the rest of our earthly pilgrimage. Having come to Christ our duty and our privilege now is to “abide in Him,” for only thus will we discharge our responsibilities, promote our wellbeing, and glorify Him.

The very essence of the Christian life is *to continue as we began*: all spiritual declension, all backsliding, is due to failure at this point. “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so walk ye in Him*” (Col. 2:6). It is in His essential character as *the Lord* that the world refuses to “receive” Christ Jesus. Like Pharaoh of old, the unregenerate still say “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” (Exo. 5:2). Like the Jews during the days of His flesh, the unconverted declare “*We will not have this one to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). But those who are drawn to Him by the Father (John 6:44) throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, and give themselves up to be ruled by Him. Christ is “the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*” (Heb. 5:9). Having surrendered to His claims and received Christ Jesus as “the Lord,” the Christian is now to submit to His sceptre: just so far as we do so, is a practical union with Him maintained by us.

“To whom coming, as unto a living Stone” (1 Peter 2:4). Let it be duly noted that this is predicated of the Lord's people, and that it is not simply said they “came” to Christ, but “to whom *coming*”! We are to “come to Christ” not once and for all, but frequently, daily; in other words, we are *to continue as we began*. Christ is the only one who can minister to our deepest needs, and to Him we must constantly turn for the supply of them. In our felt emptiness, we must draw from “His fullness” (John 1:16); in our weakness we must turn to Him for strength; in our ignorance, we must apply to Him for wisdom. In our falls into sin, we must seek from Him a fresh cleansing. *All* that we need for time and eternity is stored up for us in Christ. If we have backslidden, let us “repent and do the *first* works” (Rev. 2:5)—cast ourselves upon Christ anew, as self-confessed sinners, seeking His mercy and forgiveness, renewing our covenant to serve and obey.

“Abide in Me, and I in you” (John 15:4): we must cultivate fellowship with Christ—by subordinating our hearts, minds and wills to Him—if He is to have fellowship with us; for a holy Christ will not commune with any who follow a course of unholiness. The same order is laid down again in the next verse, “I am the Vine, ye are the branches: he that (1) abideth in Me and (2) I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit; for without Me ye can do nothing.” Very searching is this: we need to lay it to heart, and translate into earnest daily prayer. Then the Lord added, “If ye abide in Me and *My words abide in you*” (v. 7). Here we are told *how* our practical union with Christ is maintained, namely, by our cherishing His words in our hearts, meditating upon them in our minds, submitting to them with our wills, being regulated by them in our actions. Thus, we “abide” in Christ by being in subjection to Him, by obeying Him.

“If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). How blessedly this illustrates His declaration “when He putteth forth His own sheep, *He goeth before them*” (John 10:4), and again, “leaving us an example, that we should follow His steps.” Christ requires nought from His followers but what He first submitted to Himself. Christ subordinated Himself in all things to God: submitting Himself to God, committing Himself to God. He did not seek His own glory, do His own will, save His own life, plead His own cause, or avenge His own wrong. Self was never a consideration with Him: His only concern was obedience to the Father's commandments, the promotion of the Father's glory, abiding in the Father's love. “I delight *to do Thy will*, O My God” (Psa. 40:8) summed up His life.

Christ walked in perfect unison with God. He was of one mind and heart with Him. He had no separate interest from His Father, and no separate joy. His declaration “I and My Father are one” applied as truly to His human walk on earth as it did to the unity of the Divine nature. Whatever touched the Father, equally and in the same way affected Him. “The zeal of *Thine* house,” He said, “hath eaten *Me* up.” He pleased not Himself, but as it is written “The reproaches of them that reproached *Thee*, fell on *Me*.” There was perfect harmony of sentiment, unity of desire, oneness in aim between Him and the Father. At the beginning it was “I must be about My Father's business.” In Gethsemane it was “Father, Thy will be done.” At the finish it was “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit.” And to His people He says, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in *My* love; even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in *His* love.”

It was by the keeping of God's commandments that Christ abode in the Father and the Father in Him. Of

course, that mutual indwelling never could, through all His perfect lifelong obedience, become more full and complete, in principle and essence, than it was before the incarnation. But to His human consciousness, and in His human experience, the sense of that fellowship must have grown more intense and more precious, as His doing of God's will went on and on to its terrible yet triumphant close. Among the things that the man Christ Jesus learned about obedience through the things which He suffered, must have been the fact that subjection to God carried with it a mighty power to promote and intensify the indwelling of God in man and man in God. And though He learned the griefs and pain which such obedience as He had undertaken to render involved, yet He learned too of its compensating pleasure and joy of abiding in the Father's love.

Let, then, *our* keeping of God's commandments be, in our measure (by the Spirit helping us), like Christ's. In our case, like His, submission to the Divine authority may involve a bitter cup to be drunk and a heavy cross to be borne; for, like Him, we have to learn obedience *by suffering*. But let the obedience we thus learn be of the same sort as His: the giving up of our own wills, always, everywhere. Then, and only then, shall we find how “good and perfect and acceptable is the will of God” (Rom. 12:2). We abide in Christ, then, when our will is merged in His will, when His thoughts become our thoughts, when our ways are His. It is only as we enter in a practical way into His mind and heart, that He enters, experimentally, into ours. This is the secret of rest and repose, of peace and joy, of fruitfulness and usefulness.

That our practical union with Christ, our “abiding” in Him, consists of and is maintained by *obedience*, is also clear from “And he that keepeth His commandments dwelleth in Him, and He in Him” (1 John 3:24). There can be no such mutual indwelling if there is on our part disobedience to the Divine commandments. A course of sinning is altogether incompatible with communion with the Holy One. To abide in Christ is to have our wills merged in His, as His was in the Father's. Thus it is a combination of outward movement and inward repose: the feet acting, the hands busy, yet the heart resting in Him. It is to think, feel, and act as Christ does with regard to God and His Law, sin and righteousness, holiness and grace; to entertain the same sentiments with reference to all things.

It only remains for us to glance at another aspect of practical union, and that is, as it concerns *our dealings with the Lord's people*. As the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people is evidenced by their practical communion with Him, so the mystical and spiritual union which exists between Christians is to be manifested by a *practical* communion with them. There is a blessed union existing between the saints, as saints, which nothing can sever. They have been made partakers of the same new and spiritual birth; they are partakers of the same heavenly calling (Heb. 3:1); they are partakers of like precious faith (2 Peter 1:1). One God is their Father, one Christ is their Lord, one Spirit is their Comforter. They are members of one body, and they have one hope of their calling. Therefore are they exhorted to be “Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). So eminently was that unity evidenced at the beginning we read, “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul” (Acts 4:32). How should it be otherwise, seeing that “They continued steadfastly in the apostle's doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42).

But alas, what an entirely different state of affairs do we now behold in Christendom: we will not say among the Lord's own people, but among those bearing His name. What division, what strife, what

jealousy! What sectarian walls and barriers exclude some of Christ's sheep from other members of His flock! “Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God” (Rom. 15:7) is the Divine injunction. That does not mean “receive” into church-fellowship (the Roman saints were already in *that* relationship: Rom. 12:4-8), but “receive” each Christian brother and sister *into your hearts*, so that you interest yourself in their welfare, and do all in your power to promote their temporal and eternal interests. But today, Baptists, for the most part, will “receive” none but a “Baptist,” the Presbyterians none but a “Presbyterian,” those known as the “Brethren” none but one who is “identified” with them. That is one reason why—as a protest against sectarianism—the writer remains unattached.

O what a lack of brotherly kindness, tender sympathy, and Christian affection now obtains. Instead of bearing each other's burdens, some seem most pleased when they can add to them. O for grace to sink our petty differences, and seek a practical union and communion with the whole family of God; loving those whom the Lord loves, and walking in affection with those whom He has redeemed with His precious blood. But this too often calls for self-denial and self-sacrifice—*not* sacrificing God's Truth, not sacrificing any Christian principle, but mortifying our carnal pride which loves to have the pre-eminence. O for grace to “know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary” (Isa. 50:4), to “Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep” (Rom. 12:15), to “lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees” (Heb. 12:12). If we do not, Christ will yet say to us, “Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye *did it not to Me*” (Matt. 25:45).

What a word is this, “Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: FOR we are members one of another” (Eph. 4:25). What a *motive* is here presented for Christians being truthful toward their fellow-Christians! By lying to one another they *injure* the union and communion which the members of the mystical Body of Christ have with each other in Him! As another has said “If I lie to my brother, I do the same thing spiritually, as if I used my right hand to stab my left, or as if I used my eye to thrust my leg into a dirty ditch.” What high and holy ground is this! O what a spirit of loving communion there should be—*manifested* in a PRACTICAL way—between those who are united to Christ their common Head, and in Him to one another. The Lord be pleased to grant all-needed grace to both writer and reader to act accordingly.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1936

### **Gradual Conquest.**

“I will not drive them (the Canaanites) out from before thee in one year; lest the land become desolate, and the beast of the field multiply against thee. *By little and little* I will drive them out from before thee, until thou be increased, and inherit the land” (Exo. 23:29, 30). Thus it is with the children of God. If they had not enemies without and within, and oppositions in their way, there are some dangerous “beasts” that would be ready to “increase” upon them.

For instance, there is a beast which is called *pride*, that might grow upon you if you had no enemies to fight with, and while (experimental—A.W.P.) sanctification is incomplete. Hence, a thorn in the flesh was given to Paul that he might not be exalted above measure. Is not the thorn in the flesh well ordered that prevents confidence in the flesh? There is a beast called *security*, that might grow upon you. But now there are enemies on all hands of you, to prevent your falling asleep, to keep you watching and waking, and constantly on your guard. There is a beast called *presumption*, that might grow upon you, and make you think you were able to go forward to Heaven upon your own legs and in your own strength, if you found no such enemies in the way. There is another beast called *worldly-mindedness*, that might grow upon you, if you had no adversaries and adversities to vex you, and wean you from the world. You would be in danger of saying, It is good to be here. But now the wars and battles in your way to Heaven make you say with your heart, O! it is better to be there.

There is a beast, a filthy brute beast, called *sensuality*, that might grow upon you, believer, that might

make you lukewarm and formal in all your duties, as well as carnal and light in the intervals of duties. But the sight of your spiritual enemies on the field will make you see a need to be spiritual, zealous, earnest, and fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. There is also a filthy dumb beast which is called *forgetfulness*, that would certainly grow upon you, and be very dangerous to your soul and spiritual welfare, if your enemies were all destroyed. Therefore God says, “Slay them not, lest My people forget” (Psa. 59:11). If the execution were quick and hasty, the impressions of it would not be deep and durable. Swift destructions startle men for the present, but they are soon forgotten; therefore, when we think that God's judgments upon the nations of our spiritual enemies come on but very slowly, we must conclude that God hath wise and holy ends in that gradual procedure. “Slay them not, lest My people forget”—extract from a sermon by Ralph Erskine, 1760.

Yes, Christian reader, God has a good reason for permitting the lusts of the flesh to rage, at times, within you. All His ways are marked by infinite wisdom, even though very often we are unable to discern it. So it is here. How often has a saint wondered why God has withheld that victory over indwelling sin, for which he has prayed so long and so earnestly. There is a needs-be for failure as well as victory, for sorrow as well as joy. In the dust before Him is our proper place, and if we leave it, He suffers us to be *tripped up* by Satan, to fling us back there! Moreover, as Mr. Erskine points out, our graces must be *exercised* if our “enemies” are to be prevented from having dominion over us. One day we shall perceive more clearly why God permitted us to experience so many falls, and to “go halting” all our days; and *why* it was that “by little and little” He vanquished our spiritual foes.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *8. Experimental.*

We have now arrived at the last and, in some respects, the most blessed aspect of our theme: for what does our mystical, legal, vital, saving, and practical union with Christ amount to, unless it issues in experimental, intimate, precious oneness of heart with Him? This is really the simplest branch of our many-sided subject, yet not a few find it the most difficult: not because of its intellectual intricacy, but because they find it so hard to believe, and harder still to carry out into practice. It seems too good to be true, too blissful for realisation in this life, too far above the reach of poor worms of the dust wriggling in the mire. Was it not thus when, as an awakened and convicted sinner, you first heard that Christ was an all-sufficient Saviour?—ah, but *not for ME*. Later, what difficulties presented themselves to your mind: your vileness, your utter unworthiness, your unbelief! What penances, reformations, labours, you supposed were necessary to qualify you for His salvation! But when the Spirit communicated faith, you were amazed at the simplicity of what before had baffled you.

It is much the same in the history of many Christians concerning experimental union and communion with Christ—a conscious, intimate, joyous fellowship with Him who is Altogether Lovely. When they hear or read of this, they conclude that such a blissful experience is not for *them*. Sin is too powerful, too active within, to ever hope for close fellowship with the Holy One in this life. Others may be more favoured, their corruptions may be more Divinely subdued, but as for *me*, I can only expect to go halting and mourning the rest of my earthly pilgrimage. At best, I can only hope that God will not utterly cast me off,

that He will mercifully preserve me from open transgressions which would bring dishonour upon His cause, that He will graciously bear with my innumerable failures, and at last take me to Heaven for *Christ's sake*; but that He should grant me any more than an occasional smile, a sip of His love by the way, is too much for me to expect.

“Ye were called unto the *fellowship* of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). To whom were those words first addressed? To those who in their unregenerate days had been preserved from flagrant sins? No indeed, some of them had been guilty of the grossest crimes, but they were “washed, sanctified, justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God” (see 1 Cor. 6:9-11). Were they, then, now living unblemished lives, walking in flawless obedience to God's commands? No, far from it; read through the Epistle, and observe the many offences which the Corinthian saints had committed. Nevertheless, to them the Apostle was moved to say “Ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son.” and if *they* were, rest assured Christian readers, that *we* are, too. Though so utterly unworthy in ourselves, still having the flesh unchanged within us, sin ever harassing and tripping us up; yet “called unto the fellowship of His Son”!

Alas that so few understand of what that “fellowship” should consist of. Alas that any Christian should conclude that indwelling sin, with its daily activities, outburstings, and defilements, make “fellowship” with Christ an *impossibility*. Alas that so many suppose that this “fellowship” consists only of an ecstatic experience on the mountain-tops, enjoyed solely by those who gain a constant victory over indwelling corruptions and outward temptations. Were *that* the actual case, the writer would not be penning these lines; rather would he completely despair of attaining unto such “fellowship” with Christ in this life. Ah, my reader, it is those who are still vile sinners in themselves, who find *no* good thing dwelling in their flesh, who are called unto fellowship with God's Son! Surely *that* is indeed “good news.” Blessed be His name, the Lord is “a very present help *in trouble*”: for those who are troubled by their futile efforts to heal the plague of their own hearts; troubled over un-answered prayers for grace to subdue their iniquities. Yes, Divine love has made full provision for *such* to enjoy experimental fellowship with Christ in this life.

“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*; of whom I (not “was,” but) *am* chief (1 Tim. 1:15), and it is equally true, blessedly true, that He has *fellowship* with SINNERS. If it were not so, there would be none in this world with whom He could have fellowship, for “there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20). True, the ineffably holy Christ will not have any fellowship with us in our *sins*, and no renewed heart would desire Him to do so. Nevertheless, it is equally true that He *does* have “fellowship” with sinners: saved sinners, yes; but *sinners* all the same. Did He not have the most intimate fellowship with the Apostles? and were they not men of like passions with us?—very far from sinless perfection were they.

But let us now attempt to define *the nature* or character of experimental union and communion with Christ. “There is a Friend which *sticketh closer* than a brother” (Prov. 18:24) makes known *His* side of this union; “there was *leaning on Jesus' bosom* one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23) exhibits *our* side of this communion. The first of these remarkable and inexpressibly blessed Scriptures presents to us an aspect of Truth which some find it difficult to lay hold of and enjoy. In certain circles the exalted dignity of Christ's Person has received such emphasis, that a proportionate presentation has not been given of the intimate relations which He sustains to His people: a balance has not been preserved between that in

Christ which *awes and* that which *melts* the heart. It is possible to become so occupied with the Lordship of Christ, as to almost (if not quite) lose sight of His Friendship: to be so engaged in rendering to Him the honours which are due Him as God, as to overlook the tender sympathy and compassion which He has for His people as Man.

We are not unmindful of the fact that, in other circles, there has been a deplorable lack of the reverence and homage to which Immanuel is entitled, a fearful cheapening of the truth concerning Him, a light and unbecoming alluding to Him as “Jesus,” “our Friend,” “our elder Brother,” which grates upon the ears and grieves the hearts of those who have been better taught. Yet in our revolt from this unholy familiarity with the Lord of Glory and the almost total absence of giving to Him the worship which is His due, there is no sufficient reason why we should swing to the opposite extreme, and view Christ as so far above us as to preclude free approaches to and intimate fellowship with Him. He *is* our Lord, and as such we must prostrate ourselves before Him in the dust, and address Him with holy awe. He is *also* our Friend, and as such we should open our hearts to Him with the utmost freedom, casting all our care upon Him, knowing that He careth for us (1 Peter 5:7).

Experimental union with Christ is made possible by and is to issue from our *practical* union with Him, that is, our “walking together” in agreement with His revealed will. Experimental communion with Christ is exercised in happy subjection to Him as our Lord, and in intimate intercourse with Him as our Friend. Christ Himself is that “Friend which sticketh closer than a brother.” This term “Friend” tells of the *closeness* of that relationship which Divine grace has established between the Redeemer and the redeemed. It reveals the warm throbbings of His heart unto His own. It gives them full warrant for the fullest confidence and the most unreserved dealings with Him; as it assures of His loving sympathy and deep interest in all that concerns them. There is no aloofness on His part, and there should be no reserve on our part. There should be a readier unburdening of ourselves *to Him* than to our dearest earthly friend or nearest relative.

There are three things requisite in order to our having close communion with one of our fellows. First, that person must be real and present to us: fellowship is not possible with one we know not, or who is far removed from us. Second, we must have a free access to that person, with confidence and boldness toward him: fellowship is not possible where formalities bar our approach and where fear or awe dominates the soul. Third, there must be mutual affection and esteem. Fellowship is not possible where loves exists not or where it has cooled off. Now apply all of this to our present subject. If the soul is to enjoy real experimental union and communion with Christ, He must be a living reality to the heart; faith must bring Him near and give freedom of approach to Him: and the affections must be kept warm and active toward Him; otherwise our religion will quickly degenerate into a mechanical routine, devoid of reality and joy.

In the next place, let it be as definitely insisted upon that, our communion with God and His Christ must be *in the light*. “This then is the message which we have heard of Him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth; But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:5-7). We cannot now give an exposition of this important passage, but must confine ourselves to that which bears directly upon what we are now treating of, namely, the character of

experimental communion with Christ. What is it “to walk in darkness”? and what is it to “walk in the light”? The question is one: though viewed from both the negative and positive sides.

The first and most obvious answer must be that, to “walk in darkness” is to conduct ourselves unholily, to follow a course of sin: the works of darkness are the works of the flesh. But we must press the matter more closely home to our consciences. In order to do this, let us consider the leading characteristic of light. The most prominent property of light is its transparency and translucency: it is patent, open, always and everywhere so, as far as its free influence extends. The entrance of light spreads reality all around. Clouds and shadows are unreal: they breed and foster unreality. Light, then, is the naked truth: it makes manifest, it exposes things. Thus the chief conception which this metaphor of “light” conveys is, that of *openness*, clearness, transparency, reality. And that is what God is; that is what Christ—“the light of the world”—is; that is what the Word of Truth is—“a light shining in a dark place.”

“The Light shineth in darkness” (John 1:5). He who is the Light came to seek and to save those who “sat in darkness” (Matt. 4:16). “For ye were sometime darkness” (Eph. 5:8): what a word is that!—not only that in our unregenerate days we dwelt in darkness, but we *were* in ourselves “darkness.” By the Fall we lost that element of clearness, brightness, openness, in which we were created at first. Sin entered, and with sin, shame. The clear and open sunshine of the presence and countenance of Him who is Light became intolerable; the covering of fig leaves and the hiding-place of the trees of the garden was preferred. Henceforth, to fallen and unregenerate man, light became offensive: darkness is upon the face of the deep of his heart. Henceforth, darkness is his element: he loves darkness rather than light (John 3:19). Therefore, deception, insincerity, hypocrisy, concealment, characterize him in his attitude toward God.

But at regeneration a miracle of grace takes place: Divine light shines in the heart (2 Cor. 4:6), and the consequence is “but now are ye light in the Lord” (Eph. 5:8). The result of this is revolutionizing. Not only is the soul now enabled to see things, and to see itself, in God's light, but he renounces the works of darkness, “the hidden things of dishonesty.” He throws off his cloak of pretense, he comes out into the open and truthfully confesses to God what he is. He no longer attempts to cover his sins, or pose as a good and righteous person; but honestly owns himself to be a polluted leper, an incorrigible rebel, an inveterate transgressor, a hell-deserving sinner! “An *honest and good heart*” (Luke 8:15) is now his: previously he thought highly of himself and wished others to flatter him; now, he loves *the truth*, and abhors deception and hypocrisy. And, as pointed out in the last article, the believer must *continue* as he began.

It is into the fellowship of Him who is “light” the believer has entered, and if real communion is to be preserved there must be openness and genuineness on his part. Christ will not tolerate any deception: any attempt at concealment or disguise is certain to displease Him. It is both our madness and our loss to try and hide anything from Him. But He is no hard taskmaster; instead, He is full of love and tender mercy. It is written “A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench” (Isa. 42:3). His ears are ever open unto the cries of His erring people, and their tears of repentance are precious in His sight (Psa. 56:8). Perfect openness and transparent honesty in our dealings with Him, is what He requires; deceit and insincerity He will not tolerate. We cannot walk in the darkness of pretense and have fellowship with Him who is the Light!

“But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another” (1 John 1:7). Note it is not now “as He *is* light” (as in v. 5), but “as He is *in* the light.” The thought here is that, the same clear and transparent atmosphere surrounds them both: we walk in the light in which God is: it is the light of His own pure truth, His own nature, of absolute reality. The light in which God dwells is His own light: the light which He *is* Himself. In that light He sits enthroned: in that light He sees and knows, surveys and judges all things. And the light in which we are to walk is identically the same light as that in which God is. The same pure medium of vision is given to us: “In *Thy* light shall *we* see light” (Psa. 36:9). In other words, we must measure everything by God's pure truth and judge ourselves in the light of His holiness.

The same clear-shining, transparent atmosphere of holiness, truth, and love is to surround us, penetrating our inner man and purging our mind's eye, our soul's eye, our heart's eye, that it may see sin as *God* sees it—as “this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer. 44:4); that we may see holiness as *God* sees it—as the inestimable thing which He loves; that all things, all events, all men, all our motives, thoughts, words, deeds, may appear exactly to us as what they appear to Him. It is into a fellowship of *light* we are invited to walk. If there is to be a *real* fellowship, it must be a fellowship of *light*, where there is no compromise, no pretense, no insincerity: where the things of darkness and dishonesty are renounced. But can I, who am so full of sin and corruption, go forth into that light, which is so pure and piercing? Not apart from the cleansing blood of Christ! Thank God for the perfect and ever-availing provision of Divine grace, providing for the removal of every obstacle which my depravity might interpose against walking in the light.

Experimental communion with Christ is the blessed goal towards which all the other unions lead: that the Lord's people may have personal, conscious, intimate, joyous union with Him who loved them and gave Himself for them—an experience beginning in this life, continuing (more perfectly) throughout the endless ages of eternity. The grand end of our vital, saving, and practical union with Christ is to bring us into *experimental oneness* with Him: that we may drink into His spirit, have His mind, share His joy. Of all the experiences of God's saints on earth *this* approximates nearest to the heavenly bliss. Experimental union consists of knowing, loving, enjoying Christ: it is having plain, practical, personal dealings with Him. A deeper and fuller knowledge of Christ will increase our confidence and joy in Him. The more we are enabled to realise Christ's relation to us and His changeless love for us, the easier and freer will be our approaches to Him.

Experimental union is based upon *faith's realisation* of Christ's relation to us and of our relation to Him, enabling the soul to say, “my Beloved is mine, and I am His” (Song. 2:16). It is faith, and nothing but faith, which makes God in Christ real, yea, present, to the soul: “*seeing* Him who is invisible” (Heb. 11:27). It is faith, and faith alone, which brings Christ down unto us: “that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith” (Eph. 3:17). It is faith which gives freedom of approach to Him: “we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him” (Eph. 3:12)—the faith of which He is both the Author and the Object. It is only by faith we can enjoy the fact that we were loved by Him from all eternity, and that He now bears us on His heart in the immediate presence of God. “*I live by the faith* of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20) contains the sum total of all spiritual life and spirituality.

Yet the cementing band of this union is *love*. Faith unites savingly; love, experimentally. Love is as truly a

uniting grace as is faith, though it does not unite in the same way. “God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him” (1 John 4:16). Where two persons really love each other, their mutual affection makes them to be one: they are wrapped up in each other. So there is a mutual, hearty, reciprocal love, between Christ and believers; He loves them, and they Him; and by virtue of that mutual love there is an intimate, experimental union between them. The husband and wife are one not merely by the marriage covenant—the legal tie and external relationship—but also and chiefly because of the love and affection there is between them. So it is betwixt Christ and His saints: love, stronger than death, knits them together.

Experimental communion with Christ, then, consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence: sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luke 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (John 13:23). The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in His wondrous and changeless love for us, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Our daily aim should be a more full and free acquaintance with the Lover of our souls; and this, not so much in a doctrinal way, as in a personal and experimental way, in actual communion with Him. It is in real intercourse with our friends, and in their converse with us, that we get most and best acquainted with them. It is even so with the Lord Jesus Christ, our best Friend. Open your heart freely to Him, and beg Him to graciously open His heart freely to you. Humbly remind Him of His words, “Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you *friends*; for all things that I have heard of My Father I have made known unto you” (John 15:15).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### **Grace Preparing for Glory.**

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:11-13). The opening “For” looks back to verse 10. In the immediate context the Apostle had exhorted servants to walk amiably and faithfully, so that they “adorned the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.” It is deeply important that we should be *sound* in doctrine, for error acts upon the soul the same as poison does upon the body. Yes, it is very necessary that we be sound in the Faith, for it is dishonouring to God and injurious to ourselves to believe the Devil's lies, for that is what false doctrine is. Then let us not despise *doctrinal* preaching, for “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine” (2 Tim. 3:16).

But there is something else which is equally important as being sound in doctrine, namely, that we *adorn* it by our conduct. The sounder I am in doctrine, the more loudly I advertise my orthodox views, the more do I bring that doctrine into reproach if my life be worldly and my walk carnal. How earnestly we need to pray for Divine enablement that we may “adorn the doctrine in all things.” We need the doctrine of Scripture written upon our hearts, molding our character, regulating our ways, influencing our conduct. We “adorn” the doctrine when we “walk in newness of life,” when we live each hour as those who must appear before the judgment seat of Christ. And we are to “adorn the doctrine in *all* things”: in every sphere we occupy, every relation we sustain, every circle God's providence brings us into.

The Apostle now enforces what he said in Titus 2:10 by reminding us that “the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men.” This is in blessed contrast from the Law, which brings naught but “condemnation.” But the grace of God bringeth *salvation*, and that in a twofold way: by what Christ has done *for* His people, and by what He works *in* them. “He shall save His people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21): save from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from the love or power of sin. This grace of God “hath appeared”: it has broken forth like the light of the morning after a dark night. It has “appeared” both objectively and subjectively—in the Gospel and in our hearts: “when it pleased God . . . to reveal His Son *in me*” (Gal. 1:15, 16); “God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined *in our hearts*” (2 Cor. 4:6).

The grace of God—His lovingkindness, His goodwill, His free favour—hath appeared “to all men.” That expression is used in Scripture in two different senses: sometimes it means all *without exception*, as in “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In other passages it signifies all *without distinction*, as it does here—to the bondsmen, as well as the free, to the servant as the master, to the Gentiles as to the Jews; to all kinds and conditions of men. But how may I know that the grace of God which bringeth salvation has appeared to *me*? A vitally important question is that, one which none who really values the eternal interest of his or her soul will treat lightly or take for granted. There are many who profess to be “saved” but they give *no evidence* of it in their lives. Now here is the inspired answer.

“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Divine grace teaches its favoured recipients subjectively as well as objectively, effectually as well as theoretically. Grace in the heart prevents us from abusing grace in the head: it delivers us from making grace the lackey of sin. Where the grace of God brings salvation to the soul, it works effectually. And *what is it that grace teaches? Practical holiness.* Grace does not eradicate ungodliness and worldly lusts, but it causes us *to deny* them. And what but “Divine grace” can? Philosophy cannot, nor ethics, nor any form of human education or culture. But grace *does*, by the impulsive power of gratitude, by love's desire to please the Saviour, by instilling a determination to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called” (Eph. 4:1).

Alas, many who are glad to hear of the grace which brings salvation, become restless when the preacher presses the truth that God's grace teaches us to DENY. That is a very unpalatable word in this age of self-pleasing and self-indulgence; but turn to Matthew 16:24, “Then said Jesus unto His disciples, If any man will come after Me, let him *deny* himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.” And again, “Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:27): that is the unceasing demand of Christ, and naught but Divine grace working within can enable any one to meet it.

Grace teaches *negatively*: it teaches us to renounce evil. Dagon must first be cast down before the Ark of God can be set up. The leaven must be excluded from our houses before the Lamb can be fed upon. The old man has to be put off if the new man is to be put on. Grace teaches a Christian to *mortify* his members which are upon the earth: “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts.” Grace teaches the believer to resist these evils by preventing the flesh from *ruling* over him, and that, by refusing to allow sin to dominate his heart.

“Ungodliness” is failing to give *God* His due place in our hearts and lives. It is disregarding His precepts and commands. It is having preference for the creature, loving pleasure more than holiness; being unconcerned whether my conduct pleases or displeases the Lord. There are many forms of “ungodliness” besides that of open infidelity and the grosser crimes of wickedness. We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we are prayerless. We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we look to and lean upon the creature; or when we fail to see God's hand in providence—ascribing our blessings to “luck” or “chance.” We are guilty of “ungodliness” when we grumble at the weather.

“And worldly lusts”: these are those affections and appetites which dominate and regulate the man of the world. It is the heart craving worldly objects, pleasures, honours, riches. It is an undue absorption with those things which serve only a temporary purpose and use. “Worldly lusts” cause the things of Heaven to be crowded out by the interests and concerns of earth. This may be done by things which are quite lawful in themselves, but through an immoderate use they gain possession of the heart. “Worldly lusts” are “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (1 John 2:16).

Now Divine grace is teaching the Christian to “*deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts.” It does this by putting upon him “the fear of the Lord,” so that he departs from evil. It does this by occupying the heart with a superior Object: when Christ was revealed to the heart of the Samaritan woman she “*left* her waterpot” (John 4:28). It does this by supplying powerful motives and incentives to personal holiness. It does this by the indwelling Spirit resisting the flesh (Gal. 5:17). It does this by causing us to subordinate the interests of the body unto the higher interests of the soul.

Grace teaches *positively*. It is not sufficient that we “deny ungodliness and worldly lusts,” we must also “*live* soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.” “Soberly” comes first because we cannot live righteously or godly without it: he who takes to himself more than is due or meet will not give men or God their portion. Unfortunately the word “sober” is now generally restricted to the opposite of inebriation, but the Christian is to be sober in *all* things. Sobriety is the moderation of our affections in the pursuit and use of earthly things. We are to be temperate in eating, sleeping, recreation, dress. We need to be sober-minded, and not extremists. Only Divine grace can effectually teach sobriety, and if I am growing in grace, then I am becoming more sober. Grace does not remove natural inclinations and affections, but it *governs* them—it bridles their excess. The first thing, then, that grace teaches us positively is *self-control*. “He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that *ruleth his spirit* than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16:32).

“Righteously.” This concerns our dealings with our fellows. It is giving to each his due, dealing honourably with all; injuring none, seeking the good of all. To live “righteously” is doing unto others as we would have them do unto us; it is being truthful, courteous, considerate, kind, helpful. “Do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith” (Gal. 6:10), must be our constant aim. This is the second half of the Law's requirement, that we should “love our neighbor as ourselves.” Only Divine grace can effectually “teach” us this. Naught but Divine grace can counteract our innate *selfishness*.

“Godly.” This is the attitude of our hearts towards God, ever seeking His glory. Godliness is made up of three ingredients, or more accurately, it issues from three springs: faith, fear, love. Only by *faith* can we

really apprehend God: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of *unbelief*, in *departing from* the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Forty years ago we often heard the expression, so and so is “a God-fearing man”: the fact we rarely hear this now is a bad sign. Now there are two kinds of *fear*, a servile and a filial—a dread of God and an awe of God. The first kind was seen in Adam when he was afraid of the Lord and hid himself. The second kind was exemplified by Joseph when tempted by the wife of Potipher: reverential fear restrained him. Only Divine grace can “teach” us this. While *love* constrains unto obedience: “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15). It is only love's obedience which is acceptable unto God: the heart melted by His goodness, now desiring to please Him.

“Looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.” Now this must not be divorced from its context, for there we are shown the necessary prerequisite—*Grace preparing for Glory*. The passage as a whole is made up of three parts: in the past, the grace of God brought salvation to the believer; in the present, Divine grace is teaching him, both negatively and positively, how to live acceptably unto God; third, in the future, the work of Divine grace will be perfected in the believer, at the return of Christ.

Verse 13, then, is the necessary *sequel* to what has been before us in verses 11, 12. My head may be filled with Prophecy, I may be an ardent Pre-millenarian, I may think and say that I am “looking for that blessed Hope,” *but*, unless Divine grace is teaching me to deny “ungodliness and worldly lusts” and to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world,” then I am *deceiving myself*. Make no mistake upon that point. To be *truly* “Looking for that blessed Hope” is a *spiritual* attitude: it is the longing of those whose hearts are right with God. Thus, our text may be summed up in three words: grace, godliness, glory.

Now our “Hope” is something more than a future *event* concerning the details of which there may be room for considerable difference of opinion. Our Hope is something more than the *next item* on God's prophetic program. It is something more than a *place* in which we are going to spend eternity. The Christian's hope is a PERSON. Have you noticed how prominently and emphatically that fact is presented in the Scriptures? “I will come again, and receive you *unto myself*” (John 14:3); “This *same Jesus*, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner” (Acts 1:11); “We look *for the Saviour*” (Phil. 3:20); “The coming *of the Lord* draweth nigh” (James 5:8)—not the great Tribulation draweth nigh, not the Millennium draweth nigh, nor even the Rapture draweth nigh, but the *coming of the Lord*. It is with His own blessed Person that our poor hearts need to be occupied.

Here is a poor wife whose husband has been away for many months in distant lands, whose duty required him to go there. News arrives that he is coming back home: the devoted wife is filled with joy at the prospect of the return of her husband. Is she puzzling her brains as to what will be his program of action after he arrives? No, the all-absorbing thing for her is *himself*—her beloved is soon to appear before her. Now do not misunderstand me: I am not saying that the plan of prophecy holds little of interest, or that it matters nothing to us what course Christ will follow; but that which I am seeking to emphasise is that the primary and grand point of the whole subject is having our prepared hearts fixed upon Christ Himself. God would have us occupied not so much with prophetic details, as with the blessed Person of His dear Son.

That “blessed Hope,” then, which the Christian is “looking for” is not an event, but a Person: Christ

Himself. “And this is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jer. 23:6)—the Lord is our righteousness. “For He is our peace” (Eph. 2:14)—the Lord is our peace. “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear” (Col. 3:4)—the Lord is our life. “By the commandment of God our Saviour, and Lord Jesus Christ, which is our hope” (1 Tim. 1:1)—the Lord is our hope. To me “that blessed Hope” is summed up in three things. First, that Christ is coming to receive me unto Himself. Second, that Christ will then make me like Himself—for nothing less than *that* will satisfy Him or the renewed heart. Third, that Christ is going to have me forever with Himself—an eternity of bliss spent in His own immediate presence. Then will be answered His prayer “Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory” (John 17:24).

Now “*looking for* that blessed Hope,” for Christ Himself, is *an attitude of heart*. The Christian “looks” with the eyes of *faith*, and faith always rests alone upon God and His Word. Faith is not influenced by sensational items from the newspapers about the latest doings of Hitler and Mussolini, etc. Scripture says, “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8), and faith believes it. The Christian “looks” with the eyes of *hope*, joyously anticipating perfect fellowship with its Beloved. The Christian “looks” with the eyes of *love*, for nothing but His personal presence can satisfy him. It is an attitude of *anticipation*: Christ has given His sure promise that He *is coming*, but the exact *time* is withheld—that we may be in constant readiness. It is an attitude of *expectation*, for we do not “look for” something we know will never happen. It is an attitude of *supplication*, the heart's response “Even so, *come*, Lord Jesus.”

A final word upon Christ's title here: “The glorious appearing of *the great God* and our Saviour Jesus Christ,” or as Bagster's Interlinear more correctly renders it, “And appearing of the glory, the great God and Saviour, of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Three things are suggested to us by Christ's being here called “the great God.” First, it points a contrast from His first advent, when He appeared in humiliation and lowliness as the “Servant.” Second, it shows us He is called “God” not by way of courtesy, but by right of His Divine nature. Third, it evidences the fact that the Saviour is in no wise inferior to the Father, but His co-equal, “the great God.”—A.W.P.

N.B. The above is an address recently given by the editor in the Berkeley Hall of Glasgow, under the auspices of the Advent Testimony and Preparation Movement.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1936

### **Duty-Faith.**

It is the bounden duty of all who hear the Gospel to savingly trust in Christ, otherwise their rejection of Him would be no *sin*. Many of our readers will be surprised to hear that this self-evident truth is denied by some who are, otherwise, sound in the Faith. They *reason* that it is “inconsistent” to call upon the spiritually dead to perform spiritual duties. A certain denomination in England have the following among their Articles of Faith: “We deny duty-faith and duty-repentance—these terms signifying that it is every man's duty to spiritually and savingly repent and believe (Gen. 6:5; 8:21; Matt. 15:19; Jer. 17:9; John 6:44, 65). We deny also that there is any capability in man by nature to any spiritual good whatever. So that we reject the doctrine that men in a state of nature should be exhorted to believe in or turn to God (John 12:29, 40; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 8:7, 8; 1 Cor. 4:7). Therefore, that for ministers in the present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Spirit, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and, on the other, to deny the doctrine of special redemption.”

As some of our readers have imbibed this error, we are anxious to be of help to them. We have therefore decided to follow the article by John Newton on “Ministerial Address to the Unconverted” in the March issue by first giving brief quotations from the writings of the Reformers and Puritans, to show how the framers of those Articles of Faith *departed from* the path and policy followed by so many eminent saints of God who preceded them.

“The mercy of God is *offered equally* to those who believe and to those who believe not, so that those who are not Divinely taught within are rendered inexcusable” (John Calvin—1552—”The Eternal Predestination of God” p. 95). “A slight acquaintance with Paul will enable anyone to understand, without tedious argument, how easily he reconciled things which they pretend to be repugnant to each other. *Christ commands men to believe* in Him, yet His limitation is neither false nor contrary to His command when He says 'No man can come to Me except it were given him of My Father.' Let preaching therefore have its force to bring men to faith” (Calvin's “Institutes” Book 3, chap. 18, par. 13).

“The first part then of Christianity is the preaching of repentance, and the knowledge of ourselves . . . A man, therefore, is made a Christian not by working but by hearing; wherefore, he that will exercise himself to righteousness must first *exercise himself* in hearing the Gospel. Now, when he hath heard and received the Gospel, let him give himself to God with a joyful heart, and afterwards let him exercise himself in those good works which are commanded in the law” (Martin Luther—1540—on Galatians, pp. 104 and 185).

“When we meet with a precept, we should simply endeavour to obey it, without inquiring into God's hidden purpose . . . . Notwithstanding God's predestination is most certain and unalterable, so that no elect person can perish, nor any reprobate be saved, yet *it does not follow* from thence that all reproofs and exhortations on the part of God, or prayers on the part of men, are *useless*” (J. Zanchius—1562—”The Doctrine of Absolute Predestination,” pp. 49 and 120).

“With the promises there is joined an exhortation or command to believe, which is more general than the promise; because the promise is only made to believers; but the commandment is given to believers and unbelievers also. For the elect are mingled with the wicked in the same assemblies, and therefore the ministers of the Gospel ought indiscriminately *to exhort all and every one to repent.*” “In very truth, if thou goest forth of this world being no repentant sinner, thou goest damned to Hell: *wherefore delay not one minute* of an hour longer, but with all speed repent and turn unto God” (W. Perkins—1595—Vol. 1, p. 379; Vol. 2, p. 692).

“Let us be stirred up *to repent immediately.* Doth not God now warn you? Is it not dangerous living one hour in a state that we would not die in? May God justly strike us on the sudden? Do but purpose to live in sin one quarter of an hour; may we not be taken away in that quarter?” (R. Sibbes—1620—Vol. 6, p. 212).

“We are expressly commanded to believe, and that upon the highest promises, and under the greatest penalties. This command is that which makes believing formally a duty. Faith is a grace as it is freely wrought in us by the Holy Spirit, the root of all obedience and duties, as it is radically fixed in the heart. But as it is *commanded* it is a *duty*; and these commands, you know, are several ways expressed, by invitations, exhortations, propositions” (John Owen—1650—Vol. 14, p. 223).

“I say there is no simulation at all of God in this: that which He proposeth is but this; 'Whosoever believeth shall be saved, and whosoever believeth not shall be damned.' He sends His ministers to preach this, and *to beseech them* to believe, and to be reconciled unto God, yea, *all* they meet with.” “He

commands them to preach promiscuously unto all, persuade all, exhort all, unto faith and repentance” (W. Twisse—1653—”The Riches of God's Love” pp. 73 and 169).

“My counsel (to his unsaved hearers) is this: Stir up your souls to lay hold on the Lord Jesus and look up to Him, wait on Him from whom every good and perfect gift comes, and give Him no rest till He hath given thee that jewel *faith*” (Thomas Brooks—1653—Vol. 1, p. 144).

“This condition of faith and repentance is suited to the consciences of men. The law of nature teaches us that we are bound to believe every revelation from God when it is made known to us; and not only to assent to it as true, but *embrace it* as good.” “Our rejection of Christ, and the way of His appointing, is a high contempt of God . . . . It is a 'making light' of a rich feast of God's providing” (S. Charnock—1660—Vol. 3, pp. 68 and 469).

John Bunyan (1675) in his “The Heavenly Footman”; or a “Description of the man that gets to Heaven,” which is addressed to “All the slothful and careless people,” being an exposition and application of “So run that ye may obtain” (1 Cor. 9:24), closes with, “If thou dost not know the way, inquire at the Word of God; if thou wantest company, cry for God's Spirit; if thou wantest encouragement, entertain the promises. But be sure thou *beginnest betimes*; get into the way, run apace, and hold out to the end, and the Lord give thee a prosperous journey.”

“Preach the Gospel to every creature: yet this is not the Gospel to be preached—that God hath promised to save every creature; though upon promulgation of them, it becomes *the duty of everyone* to come to Christ, and a command is laid upon men to do it” (T. Goodwin—1680—Vol. 8, p. 245).

“Fire burneth where it meeteth with matter combustible, but a reasonable creature needeth *to be exhorted* to perform acts agreeable to his principles” (T. Manton—1670—Vol. 19, p. 247).

“It is our duty to endeavour what is impossible by our own endeavours to attain—so sin has made it; to avoid all sin, to perform perfect obedience, to love with all the heart” (David Clarkson, associate pastor with John Owen—1682—Vol. 2, p. 131).

“But you will say, if unregenerate men be dead men, to what purpose is it to persuade them to arise and stand up? This difficulty is solved in this very text (Eph. 5:14): *though the duty is ours*, yet the power is God's” (J. Flavell—1680—Vol. 2, p. 423).

“It is the known duty of a sinner under the Gospel to turn to God through Christ; and it is also declared in the same Gospel that none can of themselves turn to God and believe in His Son without the help of special efficacious grace; it must hereupon be a man's *duty* also to pray for that grace which may enable him thereto” (J. Howe—1690—Vol. 2, p. 346).

“This (Gospel) call contains the command of faith by which all men without exception, to whom God vouchsafes the same, are enjoined to believe in Christ, in that way and manner which is revealed in the Gospel: 'look unto Me and be ye saved all the ends of the earth': Isaiah 45:22” (H. Witsuis—1690—Vol. 3,

p. 353).

“Neither will this assertion make it a vain thing to preach the Gospel to *natural* people, and to exhort them to true repentance and faith in Christ for their conversion and salvation” (W. Marshall—1692—”The Gospel Mystery of Sanctification,” so highly commended by James Hervey, p. 121).

“And even not coming to Christ, and believing in Him in this *spiritual* manner, when He is revealed in the external ministry of the Word, as God's way of salvation, *is criminal* and blameworthy, notwithstanding men's want of both will and power” (John Gill—1735—”The Cause of God and Truth,” p. 87).

We could add quotations from others, but the above are from well known, representative, sound, Calvinistic divines; several of them *high* Calvinists. Yet their holding firmly to the spiritual inability of the natural man, to unconditional election, particular redemption, and the effectual call of the Spirit, *did not tie their hands* in preaching the Gospel freely, pressing upon their hearers their responsibility, and calling upon them to repent and believe.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1936

### **Union and Communion.** *Experimental.*

In seeking to define and describe the nature and character of our *experimental* union and communion with Christ it has been pointed out, first, that it consists in a ready submission to Him as our Lord and an intimate intercourse with Him as our Friend: there is no aloofness on His part, and there should be no reserve on ours. Second, it is a walking with Him in the light: where all is open, real, honest, with no concealment or pretense. Third, it is a knowing, loving, enjoying Christ, having plain, practical, personal dealings with Him. Fourth, it is based on *faith's* realisation of Christ's relation to us and of our relation to Him: only the exercise of faith will make Him real and consciously near us. Fifth, *love* is the cementing bond of this union: there is a reciprocal affection between the Redeemer and the redeemed. Sixth, it consists of a sitting at the feet of our Lord and receiving from Him, a leaning upon the bosom of our Friend and enjoying His love. Seventh, it is exercised in a real personal intercourse with Him, opening our hearts freely to Him, and receiving free communications from Him.

The great thing for the Christian is to realise that Christ not only gave Himself *for* him, but that He has given Himself *to* him: Christ Himself is mine, my very own! Wondrous, blessed, glorious fact. Oh, for faith to realise it more fully. Oh for grace to act more consistently with it. Yes, Christ Himself is mine: to live upon, to lean upon, to consult, to confide in, to *make use of* in every way I need Him, to have the freest possible dealings with Him. Christ is *mine*: to enjoy to the utmost extent of my heart, to commune with, to delight in. He is ever with me, and under no conceivable (or unconceivable) circumstances will He

ever leave or forsake me. He is ever the same: His love for me never varies: He has my best interests at heart. He can satisfy every longing of the soul as nothing else and none other can. He is ready to share with me His peace and joy. O what a happy soul I should be!

What a change it would make in the experience of both writer and reader if we could more fully grasp the amazing and precious truth that the Lord Jesus has not only given Himself for us, but that He has done much more—He has given Himself *to us*. CHRIST is ours! Most blessedly is that fact brought out in the wonderful type of Exodus 12: the selfsame lamb whose blood sheltered the Israelites from the Avenger, was theirs to feed upon, to draw strength from, to enjoy (vv. 7-11). Alas how feebly do any of us apprehend the Antitype of this evidenced in the complaints of our feebleness, leanness, fruitlessness. There is an infinite sufficiency in Christ for time and eternity, and that sufficiency or “fullness” is for us *to draw upon*; but alas, how little we do so. Surely our deepest experimental need is to be taught by the Spirit—for He alone *can* teach us this blessed secret, as He ever *does* where there is a heart really longing to know it—of HOW to make a right and full *use* of Christ.

It is only as we really live *upon* Christ that we can truly live *for* Him. Nor is this the vague, intangible, mysterious thing which human “religion” and Protestant priestcraft would make of it. It is to the Spirit-taught the most simple, natural, and practical thing for us. First, it is *faith's* realisation that Christ is truly and actually mine; my very own; mine in an infinitely nearer and dearer way than a mother or wife is mine. Second, it is *faith's* realisation that Christ is *with* me, near me, right by my side, “a very *present* help in trouble” (Psa. 46:1), the Friend who “sticketh closer than a brother.” Third, it is *faith's* realisation that *all He has is mine*—IS, not shall be! We are even now “heirs of God and *joint-heirs* with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). His wisdom, His righteousness, His holiness, His love, His peace, are *ours*. Fourth, it is *faith's appropriation* of all this—ah, words easily written, easily understood at their letter-meaning—which enables me to draw from Him, share with Him, and enjoy what is mine in Him. *That* is “fellowship” with Christ!

Real and personal *fellowship* with Christ should be made the chief aim of our souls in all our approaches to Him: in ordinances, means, and privileges. In public worship, in private reading of the Word, in our meditation, in prayer, in spiritual conversation with our brethren and sisters in Christ, free and intimate communion with Him should be our definite quest. “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4): that was the Old Testament way of expressing this truth. To “dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life” did not signify to spend all his time in the literal tabernacle or temple, but to abide in conscious communion with Him, enjoying His perfections. *This* the Psalmist “desired” above everything else, and this he “sought after.” So also must we.

Let us now anticipate an objection: What you have described in the above paragraphs is indeed a beautiful ideal, but alas, it is utterly impracticable for one in such circumstances as I am in. It might be realised by those who are free from the carking cares of this life, who have not to battle with the world for daily bread for themselves and those dependent upon them, for such who have time and leisure for holy contemplation and spiritual luxuriation. But for a poor soul like I who scarcely knows where the next meal is coming from, delighting ones self in the Lord is not to be attained unto in this life. First we would say, Be not

unduly occupied with God's temporal dealings with you, for His way in providence is often a great deep. Meditate upon the Everlasting Covenant of His grace and His boundless love to you. All God's dealings, even in the most dark and trying dispensations, are in mercy and truth. He has sworn "I will not turn away from them to do them good" (Jer. 32:40).

If you will but attend to that same word of promise, meditate upon it, and pray over it, your faith will be strengthened, and you will triumph in the Lord and rejoice in the God of your salvation. Remember the faith of Habakkuk; he said "*Although* the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: *yet* I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength" (3:17-19). On God's word the Prophet relied. Even though all outward things should, *in appearance*, make against God's word, yet we should believe, with joyful hope, in its sure accomplishment. It will be your wisdom and comfort to leave yourself and every concern with the Lord, committing all, by simple faith, into His hands. "Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall sustain thee" (Psa. 55:22).

We can well imagine other readers saying, *That* is not my difficulty: *my* trouble lies deeper than being occupied with and worried over temporal circumstances, sorely trying though they often are. Such blissful communion with Christ as you have depicted above is impossible for me: how can one so depraved, such a mass of rottenness within, such a spiritual leper, such a miserable failure in everything, ever attain unto intimate intercourse with the Lord of Glory? Ah, *that* is the real problem which weighs so heavily on the hearts of the great majority of truly regenerated souls. Nor can the complacent, self-righteous religionists of the day understand such cases, still less can they minister any help and comfort. Being strangers themselves to the plague of their own heart, having such low conceptions of sin, and still lower of the ineffable holiness of God, being blinded by pride and self-deception, it is utterly impossible that *they* should be able to enter into the anguish of those groaning under sin.

Permit a fellow-groaner to try in his feeble way to point you to "the balm of Gilead." It is *with sin-harassed souls* that Christ holds communion! Ah, *that* is what the haughty Pharisees of the days of His flesh could not understand. They murmured at Him, saying "This Man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (Luke 15:2). It shocked their ideas of religious propriety that He should make so free with those whom *they* considered were so far beneath them spiritually. And if this book falls into the hands of their many successors we would be much surprised if they did not throw up hands of horror against the writer, and denounce such teaching as "dangerous," as "Antinomian," as "making light of sin." But this would move us not: it would indeed be deplorable did we receive the approval and commendation of such people. But as of old "the *common people*" heard Christ "gladly" (Mark 12:37), so today those who are poorest in spirit will most readily receive His glad tidings.

The Gospel is, that it is the LAMB which is given us to feed on. *That* precious title speaks of Christ in His *sacrificial* character. It tells of His amazing grace and matchless love to give Himself to die the death of the Cross for hell-deserving sinners. It tells also of His giving Himself *to* His sinful people, for communion, nourishment, strength, and joy. But more particularly it reveals the perfect *suitability* of Christ for *sinners*. The blacker and viler we see ourselves to be, the better fitted are we for Him whose

name is called “Wonderful”—wonderful in His compassion, in His condescension, His readiness to bind up the broken-hearted, His power to heal lepers. His unfailing promise is “All that the Father giveth Me, shall come to Me; and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). Nothing honours Christ more than to come to Him *in faith* while feeling our wretchedness, filthiness, and utter unworthiness.

The precious blood of Christ is the only sufficient antidote for a wounded conscience. It is by new acts of faith in His blood that we experience afresh its virtue and efficacy. True, the believer feels the plague of his heart and groans under a body of sin and death, but this should not hinder him from believing—rather should it be an argument to encourage him in believing. The more conscious we are of our polluted condition, the more deeply should we realise our need of that open Fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). The dying thief rejoiced to see that Fountain in his day, and there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away. To it we should be constantly resorting. There is no danger whatsoever to be afraid of trusting that blood too much, or of having recourse to its cleansing too often—rather should we be afraid of trusting it too little. The more frequently we plead that blood before God the more Christ is honoured.

“For we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us *therefore* come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15, 16). What a precious word is this for sin-harassed souls! First, we are reminded that Christ is our “High Priest,” the One who maintains our interests before God. Second, we are assured of His unfailing sympathies: He is One who has “compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way” (5:2). Third, in view of Christ's official relation to and personal interest in us, we are invited to “come boldly (unhesitatingly, confidently, freely pouring out our hearts) unto the Throne of Grace”—the Mediatorial throne, upon which the eternal Lover of our souls is seated. Fourth, we are to come to that Throne, not only as worshippers to present our offerings of praise, but as sinners “that we may obtain *mercy*.” Finally, access there is given that we may “find *grace* to help in time of need.”

What other assurance from Him could we ask for? What further revelation of His heart is needed? A sense of our misery and wretchedness, filthiness and unworthiness, so far from acting as a deterrent, should prove a stimulus for us to come unto “the Friend of publicans and sinners.” Christ is not like a “fair weather” friend, who fails in the hour of direst need, who turns his back on you when his love, counsel, and help are the most needed. No, no! Christ is that Friend who “loveth at *all* times,” that Brother who is “born for *adversity*” (Prov. 17:17). Troubled soul, did you but know Him better, you could not doubt, that; would you but put Him to the proof more, you would obtain fuller evidence thereof in your own experience. Instead of reproving you, He will cordially receive you. It is *faith* which He asks for—faith in His love, His grace, His mercy, His readiness to welcome, to hear our complaints, to heal, to cleanse you.

*Faith*, dear reader, is neither encouraged nor discouraged by any thing we find in ourselves: it is neither encouraged by our graces, nor discouraged by our sinfulness; for faith *looks out of self unto Another*. Nothing will afford such encouragement to believing prayer as a sight of *the Lamb* on His mediatorial throne (Rev. 5:6). No matter how desperate may be our case, how often we have failed and fallen, how

low we are sunk, it is *always* the believer's privilege to turn unto his Redeemer and say, "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful *unto me* as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name" (Psa. 119:132). Oh what incentives, what encouragements He has given us in His Word to pray thus: "very great are His mercies" (1 Chron. 21:13). Therein we read of "the multitude of Thy tender mercies" (Psa. 69:16), of "His abundant mercy" (1 Peter 1:3), that He is "plenteous in mercy" (Psa. 86:5), and that "the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Psa. 103:17).

Very similar as the expressions are in sound, yet there is a vast difference between "Christian experience," and the "experience of a Christian." Real and normal "Christian experience" is for the heart to be occupied with Christ, delighting itself in Him. But "the experience of the average Christian" consists largely of an increasing knowledge of sin and self, and *that* fills him with misery and loathing, and with a sense of emptiness and helplessness. Nevertheless, that only *fits* him the more for Christ—all the fitness He requireth is to feel our need of Him. But alas, only too often *Christ* is excluded from our thoughts; and then the state of our poor minds is very variable, dark, and uncomfortable, afflicted with many disquietudes and sorrows. As we feel sin at work within, we cannot but sorrow; and as we feel sorrow, we are often distracted. Yea, this is ever the case where God leaves us to *reason* about ourselves, to exercise our thoughts on what *we* are in ourselves.

It is in seasons of despondency and sorrow that we most need to turn to Christ and say, "Look Thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as Thou usest to do unto those that love Thy name" (Psa. 119:132). *This* is to "make use" of Him, to honour Him, to own Him as our loving Friend. When everything appears to be hopeless, go to the Throne of Grace, for Christ is exactly suited to thee and is all-sufficient for thee. Our desperate case will only serve to draw out His heart, to show forth His grace, to display His compassion, to exercise His mercy, to manifest His all-sufficiency, to endear Himself to our hearts. His heart is ever toward us: "Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, *they* may forget, yet *will I not* forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of My hands; thy walls are *continually* before me" (Isa. 49:15, 16) He declares. Then why should you doubt His love, or question His willingness to receive you graciously, hear you patiently, and cleanse you effectually?

Oh, my sin-stricken brother, my sin-mourning sister, return unto Him who first sought you out when there was none other eye to pity. Say unto Him, Hast Thou not loved me "with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3); "wast Thou not wounded for my transgressions, bruised for my iniquities; so that the chastisement of my peace was upon Thee, that by Thy stripes I might be healed" (Isa. 53:5)? Hast Thou not said "Oh, Israel, return unto the LORD thy God, for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD; say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously," and hast Thou not promised "I *will* heal their backsliding, I *will* love them freely" (Hosea 14:1-4). Ah, my Christian friend, cannot you see that the Lord permits these sad falls, with the sorrow of soul which they occasion us, to make way for the discovery of His gracious heart, that we may *prove for ourselves* that He IS a Friend that sticketh closer than a brother! Earthly friends may fail and leave us; one day soothe, the next day grieve us; but there's One who'll ne'er deceive us, *O how HE loves*.

Experimental communion with Christ requires that we be continually *cleansed by Him*: a fuller

consideration of this we must leave (D.V.) for the future; in the meanwhile, let it be pointed out that Divine grace has made full provision for 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). Note well that this comes immediately after, “If we say that we *have no sin*, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us” (v. 8). Sometimes the newly converted soul is favoured with such grace, with such communion with Christ, that iniquity hides its evil face, and it seems as though sin in us has been slain. But indwelling corruption soon reasserts itself; yet pride is unwilling to *acknowledge it*, and the temptation is to gloss it over and call it by some pleasanter name than SIN. But *that*, dear friend, is Satan's effort to draw us back again to “walk in darkness”—in deception and dishonesty; and it must be steadfastly resisted.

“If we *confess* our sins”: *that* is to “walk in *the light!*” To “confess our sins” to Him, is to open our hearts to Him. It is to spread our case before Him: concealing, palliating nothing. It is to fully tell Him of all that damps our zeal after holiness, that quenches our love, that makes us miserable in ourselves. It is a laying bare of the whole of our inner man to the loving and wise Physician, who alone knows how to deal with us. And *He* is to be trusted with all the secrets of your soul. He is “faithful and just”: He will not heal your wound slightly: He will set your sins before Him in the light of His countenance, and cause you to loathe them. As you *continue* this frank and open dealing with Him, He will not only “*forgive*” but “cleanse you from all *unrighteousness*”—deliver from deceit and guile, purge from reticence and reserve.

The more we walk in God's light, the more clearly will we see what vile creatures we are, and how far, far short we come of God's glory. The more we cultivate intimate communion with Christ, the more will He cause us to see that what we deemed “trifles” are grievous sins. But if we “confess” them, honestly, penitently, daily, He is “faithful and just to forgive us.” Ever remember that He requires *truth* in the “*inward parts*,” and lies and pretense He will not tolerate. Probably you say, *I have* confessed my sins to Him until now I am thoroughly ashamed to do so any more. *That* is pride and unbelief. When Peter asked if he was to forgive his erring brother seven times, the Lord answered, “Till seventy times seven”: *that* is what GRACE does! Oh my Christian reader, come to this Friend of sinners more frequently, rely upon His promise more fully, and He will not repulse you.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1936

### **God's Use of a Tract.**

Some years ago we sent a copy of our tract “God's Call to Separation” (based upon 2 Cor. 6:14) to a brother in the Lord whom we have never met. Not long since we received a letter from him which, though not intended for publication, we hope may prove a blessing to others.

“Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). In the story which I am about to tell, I had no thought of the profitableness of my obedience to the Word; in fact I had not this text in mind. I was ruled and governed by 2 Corinthians 6:14—'Be not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.' Your illuminating tract drew my attention to this Scripture, and God the Holy Spirit used it to arouse my conscience.

“Now to my story. I was in partnership with a Roman Catholic and an alleged Congregationalist, who was an ardent Spiritualist. Our business was a growing and prosperous one, and its future alluring. I had a young and large family and step-children dependents, and my wife made large demands on my purse; so I required a good income to carry on. Some years after forming this partnership I found the Lord. I had been a backslider, and had feared I had committed the unpardonable sin; so the joy of my salvation—after six years' seeking—was deep and lasting. How near I had been to the unpardonable sin, only eternity will disclose. Even now I can scarcely realise that a man could be so enlightened and so near to the kingdom as I must have been, and fall for twenty-five years, and yet be recovered. O praise the Lord with me for His mercy to a very chief of sinners. I bless God that I do feel an abject, hateful, and slimy creature, every time

I think of my backsliding. What *can* God see in such?

“Some time after conversion your tract became effective. At first reading it did not do the work, but lay in my conscience as a good seed that finally sprang forth. I decided to leave the partnership. My partners tried to alter my decision, and failing, I secured a settlement on terms. That was four and a half years ago. Within three months the firm was in the maelstrom, and commenced to go down hill; and today it is in the melting-pot. I did not receive a cash settlement, but am being paid out of the assets, and the Receiver says I will get every penny, he thinks. My late partners will lose many thousands, and will receive nothing, or very little.

“In leaving them I acted against worldly judgment. I was driven by conscience. My only thought was to please the Lord; being willing to suffer loss by my act. But the Lord has shown me that 'Godliness is profitable unto all things: having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.' Today I am in bad health, and over sixty; but the money the Lord gave, and will give, has kept me, and with care will keep me until I am able to work again. When I think what might have happened had I disobeyed God, I realise how good He has been in making me *willing*, and causing all things to work together for His wayward one's good. Lest I might be thought 'wise' in the above, I must add that I have had many losses since retiring from the firm; and looking back, I can see selfishness, a want of calm meditative prayer before entering into matters, and much rashness in consequence in my affairs. Truly, our loving heavenly Father is a God of patience and forbearance in His dealings with His children.

“The above will encourage you, Beloved, to scatter more Seed in tracts, and to continue the work you are doing. I am not sending this for publication of course, as it is not written with that in view; but if you care to make a digest of it in your thanksgiving extracts later on, you may.”

“Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters” (Isa. 32:20). “Cast thy bread upon the waters: for thou shalt find it after many days” (Eccl. 11:1). May the above encourage and stimulate both writer and reader to heed these Scriptures.— A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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July, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *8. Experimental.*

Having sought to describe at some length the nature or character of the intimate and precious experimental communion which it is the right and privilege of the believer to have with the everlasting Lover of his soul, we will now pass on to consider the *maintenance* of the same. The Lord has graciously provided full and adequate means for this, and it is entirely our own fault if we fail to avail ourselves of them. Neglect of those means produces the same effects upon the spiritual life as neglect of natural means does upon the physical and mental. The body cannot thrive if the laws of health be despised; the mind cannot be developed if its education and discipline be ignored; and the soul cannot be preserved in a healthy state if those things which make for our well-being be slighted. God's blessing rests upon *the use of* those means of His appointing, but He places no premium on slothfulness; and if we are indifferent and careless, then we must expect to be lean and sickly, joyless and fruitless.

Each of us needs to honestly face and seriously answer this question. *How highly* do I *really* value communion with Christ? I am deeply concerned about my temporal prospects; I give much thought to my earthly circumstances; I am at great pains to obtain a living in the world, so that I may have a roof over my head and food and raiment. I am anxious to have a few close friends, and do all in my power to maintain good-will with them. I seek to do my duty by my family. Yes, all well and good; all right in their place. But *their* place is a subordinate one: *Christ* has the **FIRST** claims upon me. Do I *realise* this? Am I acting accordingly? Am I making it my chief concern to cultivate closer communion with Him? Am I—amidst

all the problems, frictions, trials of this life—making *Him* my principal Confident, Counselor, Helper? Is it *He* I am most seeking to please, honour and glorify? If not, is it not high time that I did so?

Do I not owe far, far more to the Lord Jesus than to all my earthly associates and friends, yea, than to my nearest and dearest relatives? And is He not desirous of my treating Him *as the* “Friend that sticketh closer than a brother?” Has He not invited me to the most intimate dealings with Him? Is it not my privilege, yea, my bounden duty, *to* give Him the *first* place, each day, in my affections, my thoughts, my plans? Has He not supplied the utmost encouragement for me to cast *all* my care upon Him? Has He not given me promises exactly suited to every circumstance, every difficulty, every need, I may get into? Has He not plainly revealed the *means* which will promote my fellowship with Him? Has He not shown me that neither the presence of indwelling sin nor its breakings forth into activity, need make communion with Him a practical impossibility?

But alas, what vile ingrates we are! what incorrigible wretches! How often have we given the Lord cause to say, “My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the Fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water” (Jer. 2:13)? None but Christ can satisfy the heart, yet we are terribly slow in really believing it. We grasp at shadows, pursue phantoms, seek to feed on ashes, and then wonder why we are so miserable. God will not long allow His people to rest in *things*, or find contentment in their circumstances. He it is who both gives and takes away, who gratifies or thwarts our wishes. We brought nothing into the world, and it is certain we shall carry nothing out of it; therefore, there is nothing in the world which deserves a single anxious thought from us, for we shall soon be at the end of our journey through it.

None but Christ will be sufficient for us when we are called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and none but Christ can do us any real good now: what we need is to really *believe* that truth. And does not God take abundant pains to prove the truth of it to us? He removes this and withholds that, because He sees that our hearts are too much set upon them. We imagine that a certain thing would be very pleasant and profitable, and fancy that we cannot do without it; if we could but obtain it, we promise ourselves much satisfaction from it. If God grants it to us, do we not find that it is *not* what we expected? We dream dreams, build air castles, live in many a fancied paradise, only to be bitterly disappointed. God's purpose in those disappointments is to wean us from the world, to make us sick of it, to teach us that all down here is but “Vanity and vexation of spirit” (Eccl. 1:14).

O my reader, it would make much for our peace and blessedness if we committed the management of the whole of our affairs into the hands of Christ. We need to continually pray Him to save us from having any will of our own, to work in us complete subjection to and satisfaction with His holy will. By nature we are full of restlessness, covetousness, discontent—never satisfied with what we do have, ever lusting after what we do not have. But by grace we may live more happily than a prince, even though we possess nothing more down here than bare food and raiment: yea, *shall* do so if we seek and find all our satisfaction in Christ alone. Here is the key to the extraordinary history of Paul and Silas, Bunyan and Rutherford, Madame Guyon and many others. Why were they so contented and joyful while lying—some of them for many years—in prison? No doubt God favoured them with a double portion of His grace and comfort, yet the real explanation is that their hearts were completely absorbed with Christ.

Now the gracious provisions which the Lord has made for the maintaining of personal and experimental communion with Himself are revealed, first, in the Old Testament Scriptures, particularly in what is recorded therein of His dealings with Israel; and we lose much if we fail to give our best attention thereto. There we see the Lord taking unto Himself a peculiar people out of all the nations of the earth; that which moved Him thereto was His own sovereign grace, for there was nothing in them, more than in others, to commend them to His favour. They were a poor and afflicted people, enslaved, in cruel bondage to the Egyptians. They were an unbelieving and stiff-necked people, slow to appreciate the mercy of God toward them, and slower still to walk worthily of His goodness unto them. They were a self-willed, and murmuring people, for after the Lord had wrought marvelously for them, each fresh testing they encountered found them full of distrust and grumbling. Nevertheless, the Lord patiently bore with their waywardness and ultimately brought them into the promised inheritance.

First, the Lord manifested His unfathomable *love* for them. He showed that, when there was none other eye to pity them in their low estate, *His* did; and that when there was no other arm to save them, *His* would. He heard their cries as they groaned under the lash of their cruel taskmasters; was moved with compassion toward them, and sent a deliverer. Second, He manifested His all-mighty *power*, working such wonders on their behalf as were never witnessed on earth before or since. Pharaoh withstood Him, but he and his hosts were swallowed up in the Red Sea as though they had been so many impotent ants. Wondrously did the Lord work, baring His arm, exhibiting His strength, and demonstrating that with Him all things are possible. Such displays of God's love unto and of His might on behalf of Israel, was well calculated to draw their hearts unto Him, establish their confidence in Him, and lead them to covet the high privilege of communion with Him. Such was the case: nor were they disappointed, as Exodus 15 shows.

Third, the Lord undertook to graciously act as their Guide, Protector, and Provider. On their journey unto the promised land, a wilderness had to be crossed: but they were not left to their own poor resources—the Lord Himself cared for them. A pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night conducted them across the trackless desert. A supply of angel's food was given for the sustenance of their bodies: this fell within their own camp, so that no arduous journey was required to obtain it, and no charge was made for it. An unfailing supply of fresh water was provided for them by the living stream which gushed from the smitten rock. Infallible assurance was given that while they remained in obedience to God no enemy should stand before them, that *He* would fight their battles for them. No sickness came upon them, their feet did not swell, nor did their clothes become old and worn. Full proof did they have that “Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD” (Psa. 33:12).

The Lord was pleased to reveal Himself on the most intimate terms. Their leader, Moses, was permitted to speak with Him face to face, as a man speaketh to his friend; yea, it is recorded that “Moses and Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel *saw* the God of Israel. . . and upon the nobles of the children of Israel he laid not his hand (in judgment): also they saw God, and *did eat and drink*” (Exo. 24:9-11) at perfect ease in His presence. Furthermore, God graciously acted as the Legislator of the nation, giving them a complete set of laws which covered every aspect of their life, social, political, and religious. No other people were so wondrously provided for: “He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for His judgments, they have not

known them. Praise ye the LORD” (Psa. 147:19, 20). Those commandments were not grievous, but just, merciful and spiritual, and were designed for the good and well-being of His dear people. In keeping of them there is great reward.

Finally, complete provision was made for Israel's *failures*. Those laws were not given to sinless creatures, and Divine wisdom devised a method whereby an erring people might continue in communion with Himself, and this in such a way that both His justice would be satisfied and His amazing grace evidenced. This method was a series of oblations and ablutions, sacrifices and cleansings. A priesthood was appointed to serve for God on behalf of the people, and an high priest as their special representative before Him. Peace offerings, sin offerings, and trespass offerings (Lev. 3-5) were appointed to cover the varied offences of individuals, while atonement was made for all the iniquities of the whole nation on one particular day in the year (Lev. 16). Most blessed of all was the provision made for those who had been defiled by contact with death: here the value of sacrificial atonement was *applied* to them. Obviously the blood of a slain animal could not be preserved, so its “ashes” were laid up, placed in a vessel, and running water put therein, and then sprinkled upon the one needing cleansing (Num. 19).

Full provision, then, was made for the removing of everything unsuited to the holy presence of the Lord. The appointed means were at hand for His people to approach Him without tarnishing the purity of His sanctuary. In the above type (Num. 19) “water” was *not* a figure of the Word, rather was it *the means* for applying the death of the atoning sacrifice. As long as a child of God continues in this sin-cursed world, where everything is defiling and under the sentence of death, and as long as the evil nature remains in him, will pollution be contracted and offenses be committed; and therefore will he need a daily pardon. Therefore, in addition to the general remission of sins which he received at his conversion, he requires a constant application to his conscience—by the Spirit—of the atoning sacrifice of Christ. The blood of the lamb was *shed* once for all at the Cross, but it is *sprinkled* on the believer (i.e., the efficacy of it is applied to him) as often as he needs and his faith appropriates it.

The above type is such a beautiful one that we cannot forbear dwelling on it a little longer. The sacrificial animal was to be a *red* heifer (Num. 19:2)—the color of guilt (Isa. 1:18); yet it must be “without spot or blemish.” It had to be one on which a yoke had never been bound, for Christ came to be the Sacrifice of His people of His own free will. It had to be led forth “without the camp” (cf. Heb. 13:11). It was slain before the priest, but not by the priest himself: so our Saviour was slain by others. The heifer was burned and its ashes mixed with pure water. Now when an Israelite became ceremonially defiled, he was excluded both from the tabernacle and the congregation. But here was the gracious provision made to *restore* him and maintain him in communion with God. Those ashes mixed with water were sprinkled upon him: so it is by the Spirit's re-application of the blood of Christ that those out of communion with the Lord are restored.

Now to His Old Testament people God gave a wondrous manifestation of His love, a full exhibition of His all-sufficiency and readiness to meet their every need, a complete revelation of His will for them in all the details of their daily lives, and then made a most gracious provision to meet their failures and maintain them in fellowship with Himself. Thereby God showed that He was infinitely worthy of their love, confidence, and obedience. But it is in the New Testament that we find the *fullest* occasion for the drawing

out of our hearts unto Him, the revelation of the means which He has provided for our personal and experimental communion with Himself, and of the provisions He has made for the maintaining of the same. He has done far, far more for us than He ever did for the nation of Israel: they had but the shadows and the types, whereas He has given us the substance and the antitype. Abundant cause, then, is there for the assuring of our hearts and the drawing out of them in adoring gratitude and praise. We have received a more signal proof of God's love than did the Hebrews: instead of providing an animal to shelter us from the avenging angel, He gave His own precious Son to be the sacrifice for our sins. He has granted us a more remarkable exhibition of His power: instead of swallowing up Pharaoh and his hosts in death, He has triumphantly brought Christ out of death. So, too, the provisions He has made for us while here in this wilderness-world far excels theirs. We have His completed Word for a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, and the Spirit Himself indwelling to guide and govern our wills. Far more intimately has God revealed Himself to us than ever He did to Israel: "For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness hath shined *in* our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6). Even more perfect provision has been made for our failures than was for theirs, for Christ Himself has gone, "into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us" (Heb. 9:24), and there "He ever liveth to make intercession" for us (Heb. 7:25).

"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of Life (For the Life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that Eternal Life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us); That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:1-4). We will not give an exposition of these verses, but ask the reader to note well *the order* of truth presented in them. Verse 4 speaks of fullness of joy; and of what is that the outcome? Verse 3 tells us: it is based upon "fellowship" with the Father and His Son; and in what does that fellowship consist? Verses 1, 2 tell us: in a personal, intimate, experimental knowledge of Christ Himself—seeing, hearing, *handling* Him—you only "handle" one close by your side, and one who is dear to you.

It is in intimate fellowship with Christ that real communion with Him consists. It is by the mind being daily engaged with the knowledge-passing love of Christ—meditating thereon, believingly—that the heart is drawn out unto Him. The Christian should seek, above all else, to be occupied with Christ's *love* for him, to value that love far above his own enjoyment of it—the one being the cause, the other but the effect of it. We should esteem Christ's love beyond all the benefits and blessings that flow from it. We should labour to apprehend, from the Scriptures, the freeness, the eternity, the immutability of that love. It is our contemplation of His *love* which admits us into the freest and fullest heart-communion with Him. *That* was the source and spring of Christ's own joy and blessedness—His occupation with the Father's love to Him: note how often He dwelt upon it: John 3:35; 5:20; 15:9; 17:26. The Father's love was precious to Christ, and Christ's should be unto us.

Now all our *enjoyment* of Christ's love is the fruit of knowing and resting in the same, just as it is the true spiritual *knowledge* of Christ which makes way for the exercise of faith in Him. Our deepest need is to know Christ as He is *exactly suited to us*—as the tender mother is suited to her wailing child, as the

physician is suited to a suffering patient, as a firm anchor is suited to a storm-tossed ship, as a guide is suited to a traveler who knows not the way, as food is suited to a starving man. Christ, dear reader, is exactly suited to the Christian: suited to everything which concerns him, suited to his every need, his every problem and trial, his every state or case. O to *live on* Christ exactly as He is revealed in the Word. O to *bring in* Christ continually: to make Him our closest Confident, our constant Counselor, our All in all. He is received into our minds by spiritual meditation in our hearts.

As another has said, “I simply address the Lord Jesus, inwardly in my mind, saying Lord Jesus, look upon me, take notice of all within me, exercise Thy compassion upon me, exactly as my necessities require. Keep, O keep me; bless, O bless, me; defend me for Thy mercies' sake, from sin, the world, and Satan; let me be content to be nothing; do Thou be my all. I call this *communion*. If this be so, then I find it to be more or less my constant practice; because as I cannot live but I must feel sin, so I cannot live but I must look to Jesus for salvation from it, and call on Him to exercise His grace and pity towards me, so long as I am the subject of it. Indeed, I think the greatest communion with Christ, and the Father in Him, through the Spirit, in this present state, is, and doth principally consist in a total renunciation of self, and in a real and actual dependence on the Lord; and the more *simple* this dependence, so much the better.”

The *helps* to the promotion of an increased knowledge of, communion with, and joy in Christ, are the reading of the Word—regarding the same as a series of love letters from Him to me personally—spiritual meditation upon what I have read, turning the same into simple prayer. But our space is exhausted.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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August, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *8. Experimental.*

*Christ Himself* is mine! *Christ Himself* is thine, dear Christian reader. O that our poor finite hearts could apprehend a little of what that means. Think for a moment of *whom He is*: the Brightness of God's glory, the express Image of His Person; Immanuel, God manifest in flesh. In Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. What then cannot He do! All power in Heaven and earth is His. Think too of *what He has done* for His people: He became poor that we might become rich, He came to earth that we might go to Heaven, He died that we might live. What must be His love for us! Think of His *present relationship* to us: His righteousness is imputed to our own account, His blood is our purity before God, His fullness is ours to draw upon (John 1:16), His Spirit indwells us; He is our great High Priest on high, ever living to make intercession for us.

Christ is the "*Friend that sticketh closer than a brother*" (Prov. 18: 24). He would have us *come to Him continually* (1 Peter 2:4) with all our wants, cares, sins, and sorrows; He is able to lift our hearts above them all. None outside Christ is worth a serious thought. O to bask in the sunshine of His conscious presence, to rejoice in His love, to dwell upon the perfect righteousness He has wrought out for us, to be daily occupied with the sufficiency of His atoning blood, to find in Him all that we need for time as well as for eternity. O to *live upon* Christ continually, no matter what you feel or experience in yourself. Let nothing hinder you, my brother, my sister, from keeping up an unbroken communion with your precious Lord and Saviour. This is your right, your privilege, your portion.

*Nothing* should hinder the Christian from experimental communion with Christ. He should turn *everything* he experiences with regard to circumstances, temptations, sins, friends and enemies, into seeking unto Christ, and finding in *Him* the opposite of all that grieves him in *them*. O to live freely, fully, wholly, on Christ. We shall do so in Heaven, why not do so on earth! Only as the heart is fixed steadfastly on Him is peace and joy our conscious portion. It is only by living *out of* our wretched selves that we can enjoy the Person, the work, the fullness of the Lord Jesus. This is the secret of true happiness, and only so far as we find our happiness in Him is practical holiness promoted. His eye is ever upon us, why is not ours ever upon Him? He is the Sum of perfection, the “Altogether Lovely” One. Whilst we view Him in His peerless excellency, our souls cannot but be enamoured of Him.

The greatest loss and misery which can befall us this side of eternity is to be looking off from Christ. None other can do us any real good. But the trouble is in our own proud, legal, self-righteous, deceitful hearts. We are not content to be *nothing* in ourselves, and for Christ to be *everything*. WE want to be something, spiritual “Somebodies.” We want to experience something within which will feed our pride and give us satisfaction. We want to feel that we are *better* than when we first came to the Saviour as hopelessly lost, utterly undone, woe-begone, despairing sinners. We may not be quite conscious of this subtle working of pride, but that is what it is, nevertheless. All the fitness He requireth is to feel my need of Him, is as true now as when I first fell at His feet owning myself to be a foul leper.

The whole of practical godliness is summed up in the *denial* or repudiation of SELF. We cannot make Christ our all in all till self be loathed and renounced--by which we mean *all* that pertains to self, good, bad, and indifferent. But this is only possible by the exercise of *faith*, for faith consists in going outside of ourselves to Christ for everything--for strength, for wisdom, for holiness, for peace, for joy. The whole of our salvation is in Him. O to be able to truly say, “My soul shall make her boast *in the LORD*” (Psa.. 34:2) not in my “consecration,” not in my growth in grace, not in my knowledge of spiritual mysteries, not in my “service,” not in my “victory over sin,” not in my spiritual attainments, not in the number of souls I have “won”; but IN THE LORD. O to be done with *religious self*!

Having sought, then, to show again wherein experimental communion with Christ consists, and dwelt upon the means and maintenance thereof, we must now turn to the darker side of our subject and consider the interruption and severance of the same. And in this connection we cannot do better than devote the remainder of this chapter to a careful examination of our Lord's words in Revelation 2:4, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love.” As an assembly is but the aggregate of its members and officers, the rebuke to the Ephesian church applies directly unto individual Christians who are in the condition here described. It is one in which *the heart* is not so deeply affected as it once was with the love of God in Christ, nor is there now such devotion toward nor delight in Him; and in consequence, there is a feebler resistance to sin and slackening pursuit of holiness.

It is to be carefully noted that the charge which is here preferred by Christ is not “thou hast *lost* thy first love” (as it is frequently misquoted), but “thou hast *left* thy first love,” which is a more definite act, and emphasizes the failure of responsibility. The sad state here depicted signifies a decay in grace, a declension in spirituality, a waning of affection, with the resultant loss of relish for Divine things, growing

carelessness in the use of means, and formality in the performance of duty. It is a state of heart that is here in view, which may or may not be accompanied by outward backsliding. The fine gold has become dim. Christ no longer holds the first place in the soul's affections. Some are conscious of this decay in love, while others aware of it draw the erroneous conclusion they have never sincerely loved Christ at all.

Genuine Christians may find their love for Christ languishing. Just as the body will soon be chilled if, on a winter's day, it leaves the fireside, so the soul's ardour and fervour will quickly wane if the things of time and sense are allowed to crowd out close communion with Christ. But though grace may decay, it is never utterly destroyed; hence the error of speaking about "losing" our first love. The "seed" of God (1 John 3:9) remains in His people even when they backslide: it did in David, and in Peter. There is a vital principle communicated in regeneration which is indestructible. So, then, though the Christian's love may suffer a sad abatement, it is never totally extinguished: the acts and fruits of it may be few, its measure may greatly diminish, but the root of it is still present.

That we may the better understand this spiritual disease (and thus be fortified against Satan's lies) let us point out *what it is not*. First, not every distemper or ailment which the renewed heart perceives and mourns over, is a leaving of our first love. Every act of known sin is not apostasy, nor even a degree of it; as every rise of bodily temperature after a meal is not a fever. There are infirmities and failures in the most spiritual saints. As said an old writer, "Alas for the generation of the just, if every vain thought, idle word, or distempered passion, were a decay of love." Nothing is so uncertain as to judge ourselves by particular acts, for in every act love does not put forth itself so strongly as at other times. Some obstructions of love there may be for the present, which the soul takes notice of and retracts with sorrow, but still we hold on our course.

Second, every abatement or absence of transports of soul and mountain-top elations, is not a leaving of first love. At conversion there are strong joys and liftings up of soul upon our first acquaintance with God in Christ, but such an experience is not sustained, nor meant to be so. A healthy person will regularly relish his food, yet he must not expect it to produce such sensations of pleasure as does the first meal to a starving man. At conversion our love shows itself in sensitive expressions, for as yet it is not dispersed and diffused in the several channels of obedience; but when the Christian learns how many ways he is to express his love to God, he may have a true zeal and affection for Him, and become "rooted and grounded" in love, without those ravishments of soul which he experienced when first realising that his sins were all pardoned and that he was accepted in Christ.

Third, nor must the Christian conclude that his love has decayed because he no longer experiences those conscious goings forth of heart to God as he had *in special seasons*, when God granted him a high day in His courts. There are occasions when God feasts the soul so that it is constrained to say, "My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and with fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips" (Psa. 63:5). There are times when we are favoured with rich experiences of God's love, to which all the pleasures of the creature are no ways comparable. Such are very great mercies, but they are never intended for us to try our state by. A settled calm, a quiet peace of soul, is an even greater mercy than occasional transports of joy. If we preserve our relish for spiritual things it is a surer proof of our standing in grace than in any spasmodic or sporadic raptures.

Though Christians ought not to lightly or rashly judge themselves guilty of a decay in their love, yet on the other hand they should not readily acquit themselves of it, for it is a great evil. The highest degree of love does not answer to the infinite worthiness of Christ, nor to what we owe Him for having rescued us from Hell and secured for us an eternity with Himself in Heaven. But when a believer falls from that measure of love whereunto he had already attained, it is the more grievous, because to now seek his happiness in things, to settle down with a measure of contentment in his backslidden state, is tantamount to saying that he had formerly loved Christ too much, and had been more earnest and diligent in seeking to please Him than was necessary. Thereby he condemns his former love and disesteems Christ as not worthy to be loved with *all* his heart, mind, and strength. Moreover, as love decays, so do all our other graces, with their fruits and works. Nor will Christ, who is jealous of His peoples' affection, ignore their growing coldness, but will make them smart for their sin and folly.

It is not without reason then that Christians are exhorted to “keep yourselves in the love of God” (Jude 21). The healthy Christian is still apt to remit something of his delighting himself in the Lord, and his constant duty to honour Him in all things; and at no point does he need to be more upon his guard than in *the preserving of his love*. There is much of self-pleasing in us, love of our own ease and carnal gratification, much lusting after the things of this world, and such a continual opposition of the flesh to the Spirit which ever seeks to draw off from God and heavenly things, that we cannot be sufficiently watchful against everything which has a tendency to quench that spiritual fire which should always be burning in our hearts. Unless we daily heed that exhortation, “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23) we shall quickly lapse into that careless and cold state which is the case with the great majority of professing Christians. How much we need to pray for one another “the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God” (2 Thess. 3:5).

Many who have left their first love *are little sensible* of the sad fact. One reason for this is that spiritual ailments are not laid to heart till they openly appear in their effects and fruits. A believer may be active in external duties while his love has become cold; the life of his duties may be decayed, though the duties themselves be not left off--as the Pharisees were scrupulous in tithing mint and cummim, but omitted “the love of God” (Luke 11:42). A correct outward deportment is no proof that the affections are still warm toward Christ. As the glory of God is seen leaving the temple of Ezekiel by degrees--first from the holy place, then to the outer court, then to the city, then resting on one of its encircling hills; so it is when Christians grow cold to God. The Lord no longer has the throne of the heart, then secret prayer is neglected, then family worship declines, then public duties become irksome, and then sin begins to lead us into practices dishonouring to Christ; and all because we did not observe and judge the *first declinings*.

Now *the decay of love* is seen in two things: first, in the diminishings of its degree. That love which we are required to give unto the Lord consists in valuing and esteeming Him above all else; and this is to be manifested by us in a constant care to please Him, a fear to offend Him, a desire to enjoy Him, a steady delighting in Him. When any of these are abated, as to any considerable degree, then our love is chilling or growing cold. Where love is healthy and the favour of God is highly valued, there is a sincere effort made “that we might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing” (Col. 1:10). But when the heart grows more or less indifferent whether our conduct is honouring to God, and we are more set upon gratifying the flesh, then love is decayed. While His fear be truly upon us we will say, “How then can I do this great

wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9).

Now there is in the Christian a yearning to enjoy God in Christ, and a strong tendency of heart toward Him argues a healthy love. When we cannot regard ourselves as happy apart from Him and count all else as dung and dross (Phil. 3:7-9), when we desire a sense of His love and are deeply affected by a lack thereof, we cry “my soul followeth hard after Thee” (Psa. 63:8). The Christian longs for sanctifying grace, hungers and thirsts after righteousness, and the perpetual vision of Christ hereafter. But as these desires decrease, so there is a diminishing in the degree of our love. The soul esteems communion with God above all else: “Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased” (Psa. 4:7); “I have rejoiced in the way of Thy testimonies as much as in all riches” (Psa. 119:14). But when we mourn not for the absence of the light of God's countenance shining upon us, when we cease to esteem His Word more than our necessary food, then our love is waning.

Second, the decay of love is evidenced by the intermission of its acts or effects, for when the heart grows cold and listless it becomes unfruitful. Let us consider some of the principal workings of love *Godward*. These are seen in our thinking and speaking of Him: “I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches” (Psa. 63:6); “my meditation of Him shall be sweet” (Psa. 104:34). As the wicked are described as those who seldom think upon Him (Psa. 10: 4), contrariwise, it is the pleasure of a renewed soul to be much occupied with God's perfections. But when our hearts and minds swarm with vain imaginations and idle dreamings, and thoughts about God are repelled as unwelcome guests, love has decayed. The less our love for God, the less we shall think upon and speak of Him. Again; where love is vigorous, communion with God in prayer and holy duties is ardently desired and earnestly sought: “Seven times a day do I praise Thee” (Psa. 119:164). But when communion is neglected, and a sense of God's presence is not our main object in the use of means, He has to say, “My people have forgotten Me days without number” (Jer. 2:32).

Consider the effects of love with respect to *sin*. When the sense of our deep obligations to Christ are warm upon the heart, we are constrained to strive against sin, to resist the lustings of the flesh, and turn with loathing from the temptations of Satan. When overtaken by a fault we bewail it, as she who loved much, wept much (Luke 7:47). The more vigorous our love for God, the stronger our hatred of all which is opposed to Him. But when the conscience has lost its tenderness, evil imaginations are tolerated without remorse, the heart is no longer diligently kept, nor the tongue bridled; then spiritual decay has set in. When a believer makes light of the things which once deeply distressed him, when he grows careless and vain, is venturesome upon temptations and snares, and ceases to groan over his corruptions, then he has left his first love.

Consider the effects of love with regard to the *duties of obedience*. Where it retains its strength love works self-denial, so that the impediments of obedience are more easily overcome. Love begrudges not some expense for the one beloved, and will serve God whatever it costs (2 Sam. 24:24). But when every trifle is made an excuse, and that which God requires is deemed too much and exacting, love has waned; an unwilling heart is soon turned out of the way. Again; love makes actions easy and pleasant, and says “His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3); therefore when obedience has become a burden and the doing of God's will a hard task, the affections must have cooled off. Finally, love puts life into duties:

“fervent in spirit; serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11): without this, His worship is performed perfunctorily, sin is confessed without remorse, and praise is offered without any spiritual melody in our hearts.

In conclusion, let us mention some of *the causes* of love's decay. The evil times in which we live, is one: “because iniquity shall abound, the love of many waxes cold” (Matt. 24:12). But though it be hard to maintain our spiritual fires when the world is pouring cold water on them, yet the darker the night the more brightly should real Christians shine. Again; multiplied privileges cloy. The Israelites wearied even of Heaven's manna: “a full stomach loatheth a honey comb.” When we were first acquainted with the things of Christ and communion with God, we were greatly enamoured, but now they no longer charm. But this should not be: while healthy, the babe wearies not of the breast. Again; neglect and carelessness. The Christian life is a race, a wrestling, a warfare; it calls for diligence and pains. If we neglect prayer, meditation, watchfulness against the encroachments of the world, love will quickly wane. Again, allowed sins: neglect is like not blowing the fire hid in the ashes, sinning is like pouring on oil. To dally with the pleasures of sin soon brings a deadness upon the heart.

N.B. For much in the latter part of the above, we are indebted to a sermon by the Puritan Manton.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1936

### **Duty Faith.**

“We believe that it would be unsafe, from the brief records we have, of the way in which the Apostles, under the immediate direction of our Lord, addressed their hearers in certain special cases and circumstances, to derive absolute and universal rules for ministerial addresses in the present day under widely different circumstances. And we further believe that an assumption that others have been inspired as the Apostles were, has led to the grossest errors among both Romanists and Protestants. Therefore, that for ministers in this present day to address unconverted persons, or indiscriminately all in a mixed congregation, calling upon them to savingly repent, believe, and receive Christ, or perform any other acts dependent upon the new creative power of the Holy Ghost, is, on the one hand, to imply creature power, and on the other to deny the doctrine of special redemption.”

The above are two of the “articles of faith” (quoted by us in full) of an English denomination which still has considerable membership and influence. With almost all their other Articles of Faith we are in hearty accord, as with their marked separation from the world, and the simplicity of their worship. Nor have we one particle of sympathy with the delusive errors of creature ability or general redemption, rather do we unhesitatingly brand them both as lies of the Devil. In his unregenerate state, fallen and depraved man is so completely the slave of sin and the captive of Satan, that he is altogether unable to deliver himself or take one step toward that deliverance; yea, his heart is so corrupt and his mind so at enmity against God, that he has *no desire* to be brought out of darkness into His marvelous light. Not until the Holy Spirit performs a miracle of grace upon the soul, does its possessor have any spiritual appetite or aspirations; and

that miracle He performs only in those for whom Christ died<sup>¾</sup>God's elect.

Now if we resort to human *reasoning* it will logically follow that it is quite useless to exhort the unregenerate to turn unto God or come unto Christ; yea, to exhort those who are utterly incompetent to respond, will appear to be most inconsistent and the height of absurdity. But, my reader, the things of God cannot be encompassed by human *reason*, and the moment we attempt to measure them by the line of *our* "logic," we open the door for Satan to deceive by his subtleties. He will tell us that if the Lord our God be *one* Lord then He cannot be a *plurality* of Persons, and that if we hold to three Divine Persons we are most "inconsistent" in affirming the unity of God. Satan will tell us that if God be *Love* then He will never banish any of His creatures to everlasting woe, and that if we hold to eternal punishment of the wicked we are altogether "inconsistent" in believing in the Divine benevolence.

What, then are we to do? This: *repudiate all reasoning* upon spiritual things as utterly worthless, and believe with the simplicity of a child whatever God's Word teaches. The Apostles held firmly the revealed truth of a glorious and victorious Messiah, and they could not "harmonize" with that fact a humiliated Messiah that would be crucified: the two things appeared to be altogether "inconsistent" and contradictory. But to them Christ said, "O fools, and slow of heart to believe *all* that the prophets have spoken" (Luke 24:25). *That*, my reader, should be a lasting warning to us of the utter inadequacy of human logic and philosophizing upon Divine things! We must turn from the vain reasonings of the Unitarian, and while holding fast to the Unity of the Divine nature, we must *also* believe there are three co-equal Persons in the Godhead. We must turn from the vain reasonings of the Universalist, and while holding fast to the love of God, we must *also* believe in the eternal punishment of His enemies. And *why*? Because Holy Scripture teaches *both*!

In like manner, we must turn from the vain reasonings (as in the above Articles of Faith) of the hyper-Calvinist, and while holding fast to the total depravity and the spiritual inability of the natural man, we must *also* believe in his moral responsibility and accountability to God. It is the bounden duty of God's servants to tell the unregenerate that the reason why they cannot repent evangelically is because their hearts are so wedded to their lusts; that the reason why they cannot come to Christ is because their sins have fettered and chained them; that the reason why they hate the Light is because they love the darkness. But so far from this excusing them, it only *adds* to their guilt; that so far from rendering them objects of pity it exposes them as doubly deserving of damnation. It is the preacher's business to show *wherein* spiritual inability consists: not in the lack of soul faculties, but in the absence of any love for Him who is infinitely lovely. Far be it from us to *extenuate* the wicked unbelief of the unregenerate!

The compilers of the above Articles of Faith were very largely influenced by a piece written by William Huntington in 1791, "Excommunication: and the Duty of all men to believe weighed in the balance." We have space to quote only one paragraph: "When Peter said, 'Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out' (Acts 3:19), He that is exalted to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins, sent His Spirit and Grace with the Word to work repentance and conversion in His own elect. And though *they* spoke the Word, promiscuously to all, yet *He* only spake it to His own. It was sent with the power of the Spirit. It never was sent with the Spirit of Faith to any but His own: 'When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the Word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life

believed' (Acts 13:48). This is the life-giving commandment of the everlasting God, in the mouth of Zion's King. But what effect has it, or what power attends it, from the mouth of Mr. Ryland or the mouth of Mr. Fuller, when they make it the rule of a dead man's duty? Just as much as the adjuration of the sons of Sceva the Jew, when they abused the name of the Lord Jesus in commanding the spirit, who left the man and mastered them; and so these labour for the unconverted till they get into the gall of bitterness themselves . . . . Ye might just as well go to the gates of the grave and tell the sleeping dust it is their duty to come forth as Lazarus did. Mr. Ryland may just as well do the one as the other.”

What a confused jumble is that! Confounding the Word of Power (Heb. 1:3) on the lips of Christ, with the Word of Reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:18, 19) in the mouths of His servants. What *the Lord* does, is none of our business. The commission He has given His *servants* is to preach the Gospel to every creature, and they certainly have not fully obeyed until they bid their hearers “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). *Whom* God quickens, is His own affair; *ours* is to faithfully warn the unsaved, to show wherein their sins consists (enmity against God), to bid them to throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him, to call upon them to repent (Acts 17:30), to proclaim the One who receives all who come to Him in faith. In allowing that Peter “spoke the Word promiscuously *to all*” Mr. Huntington pulled down what he laboured so hard to build up.

To affirm that the ministry of the Apostles (recorded in the Acts) furnishes no precedent for God's servants today, is as foolish, as “inconsistent,” and unwarrantable, as it would be to say that Acts 6 supplies no present rule for deacons to be governed by! The physical condition of those in the cemetery is vastly different from the moral state of the unregenerate still upon the earth. The former cannot sin, cannot reject Christ; the latter *can* and do. The former cannot read their Bibles or call upon God for mercy; the latter should! It is because the natural man possesses the same faculties of soul as does the regenerate that he is an *accountable* creature, responsible to use them *for* God instead of *against* Him. - A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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September, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *8. Experimental.*

“The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways” (Prov. 14:14). What a sad case is that of the Christian who has lost touch with the Lord, whose sins and iniquities have hidden His face from him (Isa. 59:2)! Formerly, he walked in happy fellowship with Christ, but the light of His countenance no longer shines upon him. Once he was in possession of that peace which passeth all understanding, but now the joy of salvation is no more his portion. One who has “left his first love” has, of course, grieved the Holy Spirit, and hence He *withholds* His comforts from his heart, and consequently he is full of darkness, doubts, and fears as to his state, and can find no rest unto his soul. He has given place to the Devil, only to find him as merciless as the Egyptian taskmasters. He has returned for a season to the pleasures of sin, and now he lies by the wayside, robbed, stripped, wounded, half-dead.

There is no sorer object in this world than a backslidden believer. His communion with Christ is broken, he has lost his relish for the Word, the spirit of prayer in him is quenched. On the other hand, he has been spoiled for the world, and cannot find that measure of satisfaction in carnal things which the ungodly do. Is, then, his case hopeless? Yes, so far as self-recovery is concerned, for a strayed sheep never finds its own way back again to the fold. The work of restoring backsliders from their spiritual decays is an act of sovereign grace, wrought in them by Him who is of infinite patience and abundant in mercy. When God designs to heal the backsliding of His people, He does so by giving them an effectual call to repentance, and by moving them to use and by blessing unto them those means which He has appointed for their

recovery.

To the backslider himself his case appears, at first, desperate, for it is (alas) very much easier to depart from the Lord than it is to return to Him. Having turned his back upon God, it is difficult for him to now seek His face. Why so? Because his heart is so heavily oppressed, his conscience under such a load of guilt, his whole soul filled with shame, while a spiritual deadness seems to paralyse all his faculties. Moreover severed as he is from communion with the Lord, unbelief is dominant within him, so that he is unable to apprehend the plentitude of Divine grace and the sufficiency of Christ's atoning blood. In such a state he is fully prepared to listen to Satan's lies, telling him that his case is hopeless, that it is quite useless to seek God's forgiveness. Memory, too, will remind him that he has so often in the past confessed his miserable failure to God, that to do so now would be worse than a mockery.

But presently, under the renewing operations of the blessed Spirit, a fresh hope is born within him, and he is made to feel that all is not irretrievably lost. Yet at this stage, it is of deep importance that no means of recovery from spiritual decays be sought unto save those which, for the matter and manner of them, are of *Divine* institution. Alas that so many are misled here. As is often the case with newly awakened souls—who betake themselves to physicians of no value and unto cisterns which hold no water—so not a few convicted backsliders enter upon a course which affords no remedy. It is at this point that Romanism so often gains power over souls who are seeking a relief from a conscience which gives them no respite, for unless the transgressor be under the actual guidance of *evangelical* light, he is easily imposed upon: his distress is so great, his burden so intolerable, that he is ready to listen to almost any comforter, be he a true or a false one.

There are numerous priests and preachers at hand who will counsel those whose conscience is causing them sore anguish to enter upon a course of duties which *God* has nowhere commanded—the confessional, bodily lacerations, pilgrimages, parting with large sums of money for charitable or religious enterprises, are advocated as sure sources of relief; while Protestant quacks will tell the suffering soul that he must quit this habit and give up that form of recreation, etc., etc., if he would obtain the ear of God. This same principle is illustrated in “Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before Him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old? Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn *for my transgression*, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?” (Micah 6:6, 7)—by such means they hoped to make reparation for their sins and be restored to their former condition. Let great care be taken, then, that the means used for recovery from backsliding be those prescribed *in the Scriptures*.

At no point does the amazing grace of our God appear more conspicuous than is His attitude toward His wayward and wandering children. Their base ingratitude against the inestimable favours they have already received, their wicked unfaithfulness in allowing the worthless things of time and sense to draw their hearts away from the Lord, and the grievous dishonour brought upon His name by their excuseless conduct, instead of causing Him to cast them off in utter disgust, only serve to bring out the changelessness, faithfulness, and abundancy of *His* love. O the superabounding mercies and lovingkindnesses of our blessed Lord unto such worthless wretches as we are. Because God knew how prone His people are unto grievous declensions and spiritual decays, He has graciously recorded in His

Word “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) which are exactly suited to their case: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer. 3:22); “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for Mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:4).

Such promises are made good to us by faith's appropriation and by our use of the duly appointed means. But right here a further word of counsel and warning is needed if the exercised backslider is not to miss the goal of his desires: beware of attempting to use those means, and discharge those duties which God requires, in *your own strength*. When backsliders perceive clearly that certain duties are appointed them by God, and they are convinced that they must perform them, they are very apt to act as though such duties were to be executed in their own might. Convicted of carelessness, realising their sinful neglect of prayer, the reading of the Word, the mortifying of their members, and other spiritual exercises, and knowing it was their failure to use these means of grace which brought them into their present woeful state, they are now inclined to rush ahead and perform with a will those outward works wherein the duties consist.

Alas, what ignorant, erring creatures we are: how intractable and self-sufficient. When we should be using the strength God has given us we pretend to have “no prompting of the Spirit,” and so rest on our oars. When we should be waiting on the Lord for fresh supplies of grace, we feverishly attempt to act in the energy of the flesh. How slow we are to really believe that humbling word of Christ's “without Me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). Ah, that does not accord with the pride of our hearts, does it, and hence God suffers us to experience many painful failures ere we are willing to receive its truth. Let us, then, seek to be much upon our guard against rushing ahead to perform the duties required unto our restoration, and *leaving the Lord out of* the whole of our efforts. Only God can “heal” us (Exo. 15:26), only He can “restore” the soul (Psa. 23:3). Faith, then, must humbly engage the assistance of Christ and His grace both unto and in those duties, otherwise no matter how earnestly we perform them or how zealously they be multiplied, they will not be effectual unto our recovery.

But it is time for us now to consider those duties which our blessed Lord has appointed for the recovery of His people. “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love: remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Rev. 2:4, 5). Having in the previous article dwelt upon what is signified by “leaving our first love,” we will now turn to the remedy here specified. This, it will be seen, is threefold, addressing the principal centres of our inner being: “remember” is a word for the understanding and conscience; “repent” is spoken to the affections; while “do the first works” is a call to the will: the whole man is guilty when we backslide, and the whole man (all the faculties of the soul) must be operative in returning to our Lord and Saviour. The way of recovery is here clearly defined, and though it involves that which is distasteful to the flesh, namely, the humbling of our proud hearts, yet there will be no restoration to real experimental communion with Christ, and no consequent peace, assurance and joy, until he submits thereto.

First, “*Remember from whence thou art fallen*”: this is a call to the backslider to seriously consider his condition, particularly to contrast his present sad case with his former happy one. Recollect what a difference there is between thee and thyself: thyself living and acting in the consciousness and power of the love of Christ, and thyself now in bondage to the power of some worldly or fleshly lust. Call to remembrance that while communion with Christ was maintained that the “joy of the LORD” was thy

“strength” (Neh. 8:10), but now that communion is broken, you have neither joy nor strength. Consider what an advantage thou once hadst against the temptations of the Devil and the solicitations of the flesh and the world when your love for Christ was fresh and vigorous, and how much the case is altered with thee now—how feeble thy present resistance of any sin. Surely you have cause to bemoan “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; and when His candle shined upon my head” (Job 29:2, 3).

“Remember from whence thou art fallen.” Recall the “mount of myrrh” and the “hill of frankincense” which once were trodden in fellowship with the eternal Lover of your soul. “In our returning we should have such thoughts as these: I was wont to spend some time every day with God; it was a delight to me to think of Him, or speak of Him, or to Him; now I have no heart to pray or meditate. It was the joy of my soul to wait upon His ordinances; the return of the Sabbath was welcome unto me, but now what a weariness is it! Time was when my heart did rise up in arms against sin, when a vain thought was a grief to my soul; why is it so different with me now? Is sin grown less odious, or God less lovely?” (Thomas Manton).

Second, “*and repent.*” What is evangelical repentance? Its leading elements are conviction, contrition, and confession. Where real repentance is present in the heart there is a true sense of sin, a sincere sorrow for sin, a hearty loathing of sin, and a holy shame for sin. It is called by many names in Scripture: such as, the afflicting of our souls (Lev. 16:29), humbling ourselves (2 Chron. 7:14), a broken heart (Psa. 51:17), a contrite spirit (Isa. 66:2), a smiting upon the thigh (Jer. 31:19), mourning (Zech. 12:10), weeping bitterly (Matt. 26:75). “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4), which means, first, it is *by* His goodness that repentance is wrought in us by the gracious operations of His Spirit; and second, that it is *a sense of* His goodness which melts and breaks our hard and stubborn hearts.

The convicted conscience is made to feel how vilely I have requited God for His great goodness to me, and thus sin is embittered to my soul. Thereby I am brought to take sides with God against myself and condemn my wicked wanderings from Him: so far from excusing my iniquities, I now accuse them. The heart is deeply affected by the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and grieves for having offended my loving Lord, for disregarding and opposing my blessed Benefactor, for having so evilly repaid Him, for having so little concern for His pleasure and honour. The soul will now sincerely confess its transgressions, not in a cold and formal way, but out of the abundance of the heart the mouth will now speak. “O my God, I am ashamed and blush to lift up my face to Thee” (Ezra 9:6) will be my language.

True Christian repentance is the heart turning from sin and returning to God. In the hour of penitence sin is hated and self is loathed. The deeper the repentance, the fuller will be the confession: there will be a detailed acknowledgment of our wicked conduct, an emphasising of the enormity of the evil course we have followed. As examples of this let the reader turn to Daniel 9:5, 6 and Acts 26:9-11, and observe *how many aggravations* of the sinning is there mentioned! Further, genuine repentance is always attended with sincere desires and earnest endeavours after reformation of life: “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth *and forsaketh them* shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13)—as sin is a forsaking of God, so repentance is a forsaking of sin. The language of a contrite soul is, “What have I to do any more with idols?” (Hosea 14:8).

Deeply humbling though the work of repentance be unto us, it is *glorifying to God*. “And Joshua said unto Achan, My son, give, I pray thee, glory to the LORD God of Israel, and make confession unto Him” (Josh. 7:19); “And if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you” (Mal. 2:2); “And they repented not to give Him glory” (Rev. 16:9). It must be so, for repentance is taking sides with God against sin. O how each of us needs to pray for a deeper repentance. Painful though the work of repentance be, yet it issues in pleasant fruits. As one of the Puritans said, “Groans unutterable make way for joys unspeakable.” If we sorrowed more for sin, we would rejoice more in the Lord. But let us add that, in cases where true penitents are so bound up within that they cannot pour out their souls in heart-melting confessions before the Lord, yet they can mourn over the hardness of their hearts, and grieve because their sorrow is so shallow.

“Where is the blessedness I knew  
 When first I saw the Lord?  
 Where is the soul-refreshing view  
 Of Jesus and His Word?  
 What peaceful hours I then enjoy'd;  
 How sweet their memory still;  
 But now I find an aching void  
 The world can never fill.

Return, O holy Dove! return,  
 Sweet Messenger of rest!  
 I hate the sins that made Thee mourn,  
 And drove Thee from my breast.  
 The dearest idol I have known,  
 Whate'er that idol be;  
 Help me to tear it from Thy throne,  
 And worship only Thee.”—(Cowper).

Third, “And do the first works.” Negatively this means, turn your back upon the world, re-enter the lists against Satan, resume the task of denying self and mortifying your members which are upon the earth. Positively it means, return unto the One from whom you so grievously departed, surrender yourself afresh to His lordship, render to Him that whole-hearted obedience which He requires. Make the pleasing of Christ your chief concern, walking with Him your daily business, communing with Him your supreme joy. Re-engage in the fight of faith, take unto you the armour which God has appointed, and give no quarter to your foes. Be diligent in using the means of grace: prayer, the reading of the Word, spiritual meditation thereon, and communing with God's people. Express your gratitude for the Lord's pardoning mercy and restoring grace by now being out and out for Him. “He restoreth my soul” is at once followed by “He leadeth me *in the paths of righteousness* for His name's sake” (Psa. 23:3)!

“And do the first works,” then, signifies return to God in Christ. As our departure from the Lord was the cause of all our woes, so our case admits of no remedy till we repent and turn again unto Him. It is blessedly true that Christ purchased grace and pardon for His people, yet these are communicated to them

in a way which is becoming to His holiness and wisdom. It would not be for His honour that we should be pardoned and restored without a penitent confession of past sins and an honest resolution of future obedience. Our case is not compassionable without it: who will pity those in misery that are unwilling to come out of it! The sincerity of our repentance is to be evidenced by a hearty determination for the future to live in obedience. In other words, it is not enough that we “cease to do evil,” we are also required to “learn to do well” (Isa. 1:16, 17).

“And do the first works.” It is not sufficient to bemoan the follies of the past: time present must be redeemed. As there are some sensible of their backslidings who do not actually repent thereof, so there are others who bemoan their sad case yet languish in idle complaints for their lack of love, and make no efforts to recover the same by serious endeavours. Those who are guilty of spiritual decays must not rest until they regain their former mindfulness of God and devotedness to Christ. Spare no efforts in so yielding up thyself to the Lord that *His* interests may again prevail in your heart above all sinful solicitations and vile inclinations. Engage your heart afresh to Christ, make no reservation; let your work be sin-abhorring and sin-resisting each day. “And do the first works.” When a Nazarite had broken his vow, he had to start all over again (Num. 6:12). When we have forsaken the narrow way of obedience to and communion with Christ, God requires us to return to the point from which we wandered. Thus it was with the father of all who believe. Abraham's descent into Egypt was a divergence from the path of faith and duty. And what was the consequence? This, the time he spent there was lost, and he had to return to the point from whence he swerved and begin over again: “And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been *at the beginning*, between Bethel and Hai; unto the place of the altar which he had made there *at the first*” (Gen. 13:3, 4).

Observe well *the order* which God has specified for the recovery of those who had left their first love. Perhaps we may grasp the force of it better if we transpose it. “Do the first works”: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). Ah, but do not overlook the fact that “repent” must precede this renewed activity in the Lord's service: *the past must be put right* before we can again enjoy real communion with Him! God will not gloss over our sins, nor will He suffer *us* to do so: they are to be judged, confessed, forsaken, before new obedience is acceptable to Him. And “repent” is, in turn, preceded by “remember therefore from whence thou art fallen”: the more we heed *this* injunction the quicker will our conscience be convicted and the deeper will be our contritions. O that it may please the Lord to bless this article to the recovery of some backsliders. - A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1936

### **Oil in the Vessel.**

Recently a brother in the Lord wrote calling our attention to the comparisons and contrasts between the wise and foolish virgins of Matthew 25. The substance of his remarks was as follows. They have seven things in common. First, all the virgins were in “the kingdom of heaven”: by which we understand, the sphere of Christian profession. Second, they were all of them “virgins”: not five virgins and five harlots: by which we understand, they all claimed to belong unto Christ. Third, they all “went forth to meet the Bridegroom”: they were one in purpose, having a single end in view. Fourth, they all had “lamps,” the same sort of lamps. Fifth, they all “slumbered and slept.” Sixth, they all heard the cry “Behold, the Bridegroom cometh.” Seventh, they all “arose and trimmed their lamps.”

There are six points of difference between them. First, five of them were “wise” and five of them were “foolish.” Second, the wise “took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (v. 4), but the foolish ones did not do so. Third, at the crucial moment the foolish virgins had to acknowledge “our lamps are (slowly but surely) gone out” (v. 8 margin). Fourth, the foolish virgins “went to buy” oil (v. 10), the wise ones had no need to do so. Fifth, the wise were shut in with the Bridegroom, but the foolish were shut out (v. 10.) Sixth, the foolish virgins were disowned by the Lord (vv. 11, 12).

Commenting upon the above our friend pointed out that, “There is a certain class today who differ not from the children of God as to their testimony: its purity, its orthodoxy, its sincerity. These are not Spiritists, Russellites, or the daughters of the Mother of Harlots, but 'virgins' - *doctrinally they are pure.*”

They are pictured as going forth 'to meet the Bridegroom,' not one to the 'desert' and another to the 'secret chambers' (Matt. 24:26), seeking a false Christ. The Object of their service was the same Person which the wise virgins were occupied with. The vital point in their 'foolishness' was not that they 'slumbered and slept' but that they had *no oil in their VESSELS*. Their was oil in their 'lamps' - the testimony or doctrine - but none in their vessels or souls.”

The above has deeply impressed the editor once more with the great importance of making sure individually whether there be oil in *my* vessel: the “vessel” is the soul, the “oil” is Divine grace in it. Whatever may be the precise signification of “behold the Bridegroom cometh” - whether it refer to the hour of death, the “premillennial return of Christ,” or the Day of Judgment - one thing is clear: it points to the crucial testing time. As our friend further points out: Balaam had oil in his “lamp,” as also had Judas when Christ sent him forth with the other Apostles to “preach” (Matt. 10:5-7), yet their hearts were destitute of the saving grace of God! What a terrible discovery for the foolish virgins to make: “our lamps are gone out” - a discovery *made too late* to do them any good.

This parable of the “virgins” is indeed a searching and solemn one. It has deeply exercised many a sincere soul. It has caused not a few genuine saints to wonder if, after all, the “root of the matter” were in them. It has given real point to that exhortation “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves” (2 Cor. 13:5). On the other hand, vast numbers of professing Christians are quite unmoved by its pointed message, complacently assuming that they *are* numbered among the “wise” virgins, and taking no trouble to seek *proof* that the oil is in their vessels. Strangest of all, perhaps, some of the Lord's own people scarcely know *how* to set about the task of ascertaining their state, and are so suspicious of themselves they readily conclude that their vessels are devoid of the vital oil.

The key passage for the significance of this Scriptural figure is, “Thy God hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows” (Psa. 45:7), where the reference is to the Mediator, for God “giveth not the Spirit by measure unto Him” (John 3:34); in consequence thereof, He is “fairer than the children of men: *grace is poured* into Thy lips” (Psa. 45:2). The holy “oil” was first poured upon the antitypical Aaron, and then it runs down to all the “skirts of His garments” (Psa. 133:2), that is, to the meanest and feeblest Christians. Just as the little finger or toe is animated by the same life and vitality as actuates the head and heart of a person, so every Christian is vitalized by the same Spirit as was given to Christ, the Head. As the Spirit sanctified the human nature of Christ by fitting and enriching it with all grace, so His grace is communicated to all His members.

The “oil,” then, in the vessels of the wise virgins refers to the life of the Spirit in the soul of a Christian. It is the presence of Divine grace in the heart - in contrast from knowledge in the head or correctness of outward deportment - which distinguishes the actual possessor from the empty professor. How important then is it that we spare no efforts to ascertain whether or not that Divine grace resides *in us*! Yet at this very point Christians encounter a real difficulty: as they honestly and diligently look within they perceive such a sea of corruption, ever casting up mire and dirt, they are greatly distressed, and ready to conclude that Divine grace surely cannot be present in such hearts as theirs. But this is a serious mistake; as genuine oil is distinguishable from counterfeits by its *properties*, so grace in the soul may be known by its characteristics and effects.

But the exercised soul should begin his search for indwelling grace with it definitely settled in his mind, that, in every heart where grace resides there is also an ocean of sin; and just as oil and water will not mix, but continue to preserve their distinct properties even when placed together in the same vessel, so the flesh and spirit will not combine in the Christian, but remain in opposition to each other unto the end.

Admitting, then, a sea of depravity within, my object is to find out if there be any “oil” at all which the surgings of sin are unable to destroy. When I see smoke, I must infer fire (however flickering), and if I can discern in my heart any spiritual grace (however feeble) I *must* infer the indwelling of the Holy Spirit.

Be not unduly discouraged, then, dear Christian friend, because you discover so much filthy water in your “vessel” (the editor does the same), but rather confine your attention unto searching for the “oil” within you, and remember that the presence of the same is to be determined *by its properties and effects*. Let us name a few of these. First, oil *illumines*, therefore are the blinded Laodiceans bidden to go to Christ for eyesalve (anointing oil) that they may see (Rev. 3:18). Now where Divine grace has been bestowed that soul is enlightened. True, says a serious reader, but the point which exercises me so much is, Is my enlightenment a spiritual and supernatural one, or merely a natural and intellectual one, acquired by the mind being instructed through sitting under sound teaching? Those mentioned in Hebrews 6:4 were “once enlightened,” yet no saving work of grace had been wrought in them!

Some of our readers may be total strangers to all such distressing experiences, and wonder why any real Christian should call into question the exact character of his or her illumination, troubling themselves not at all whether *their* enlightenment be natural or supernatural. Poor souls, it is greatly to be feared that a rude awakening is awaiting them from their Satan-induced sleep. But what shall we say to those who *are* awake and deeply concerned about their eternal interests? How are such to determine the matter? We answer, *test* the point. Was there not a time when you “saw no beauty in Christ that you should *desire* Him?” Is it so with you now? Or has He become in your eyes the “altogether lovely” One? You may be afraid to call Him *yours*, yet if your heart truly yearns for Him, then you *must* have been spiritually enlightened - the “oil” *is* in your vessel.

Second, oil *softens*. Oil was much used by the ancients for medicinal purposes, and we moderns might well take a leaf out of their books. It will melt caked wax in the ear; make tender a calloused bunion. It is very useful for tumours: repeated applications softening, then causing to burst, and then healing. Thus it is in the operation of the Holy Spirit. He finds the elect hard and obdurate by nature, and swollen with pride and self-conceit; but Divine grace softens them, melting their flinty hearts, bursting the tumours of self-righteousness, and imparting a contrite spirit. “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Eze. 36:26).

When Divine grace has been imparted the heart is supernaturally softened. But right here the sincere soul experiences still greater difficulty, and is ready to exclaim emphatically, Then I must still be in an unregenerate state, for *my* heart is “as hard as the nether millstone.” Wait a moment, dear friend, and *test* the matter. What are *the marks* of a “hard heart” as given in Scripture? Are they not a total absence of a *feeling* sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, an utter unconcern whether God be pleased or displeased with my conduct, no mourning in secret when Christ has been dishonoured by me? Is that true of *you*, who

are so ready to conclude you are still in a state of nature? If it is not, if sin is your burden and your soul grieves over your lack of conformity to Christ, then your heart *must* have been spiritually softened - the “oil” *is* in your vessel.

Third, oil *heals*. Hence we find the great Physician, under the figure of the good Samaritan, having compassion on the assaulted traveler, binding up his wounds and “pouring in *oil* and wine” (Luke 10:34); and He is still caring thus for His people through the gracious ministry of the Spirit. How often the blessed Comforter applies “the balm of Gilead” to the sin-afflicted people of God. What horrible bruises and putrifying sores do sin and Satan inflict upon the souls of the saints, yet how frequently and tenderly does the Spirit mollify and relieve them. First, He works repentance in the heart, which is a purging grace, carrying away the foul and poisonous love of sin; and then He strengthens hope, which is a comforting grace so that the joy of the Lord once more becomes his strength. Divine grace removes the load of guilt from the conscience, applies the cordial of the promises, and gives the weary pilgrim a lift by the way - “set him on His own beast” (Luke 10:34).

Here, then, is another property and effect of Divine grace: it heals the soul. We can well imagine some fearful reader exclaiming, Alas, that cuts off my hope, for there is no soundness in me. Listen, dear friend, no Christian is completely and perfectly healed from the disease of sin in this life, but he *is* delivered from the most fearful and fatal effects of it; and it is at *this* point you are to examine yourself. What are the *worst* things which the Fall has produced in man? Enmity against God, the love of sin, the idolizing of self. *Test* yourself by these things. Do you still hate God? - if so, would you repine because you love Him so feebly! Are you still in love with sin? - if so, why do you grieve over its workings! Is self now your idol? - if so, why do you, at times, loath yourself! Sin has not been eradicated, but its wounds are being healed - the “oil” *is* in your vessel.

The limited space now at our disposal prevents us doing more than barely mentioning a number of other features. Oil makes the joints flexible and nimble, and therefore was much used by athletes; so grace enables the Christian to “serve in newness of spirit” (Rom. 7:6) and run the race set before him. It is an excellent thing for those who have stiff joints, for it penetrates to the bones (Psa. 109:18). It makes the countenance fresh and comely (Psa. 104:15): what is more attractive to the spiritual eye than a gracious character. It sweetens our persons, so that we are unto God a “sweet savour of Christ” (2 Cor. 2:15), whereas the wicked are a “smoke in His nostrils” (Isa. 65:5). It gladdens, and thus we read of “the oil of joy” (Isa. 61:3): the heart is exhilarated when grace is active. It is an aid to digestion; so, only as grace is active within us, can we assimilate our spiritual food.

Oil and water will not intermingle: the old man is not bettered by the new, nor is the new corrupted by the old. Oil cannot be made to sink beneath the water, but always floats on top; so grace in the believer is indestructible, and at the end it will be seen to have fully triumphed over sin. Oil is a super-eminent liquid, for it will not incorporate itself with anything lighter; it will have the highest place above all other liquids. So the graces of the Spirit are of a superior character - as far above the gifts of nature as spiritual blessings excel earthly things. Oil quietens troubled waters, giving relief to a ship in a storm: so grace often subdues the turbulent workings of sin. What a blessed promise is that in Psalm 92:10, “But my horn shalt Thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn: I shall be anointed with *fresh* oil”: new supplies of grace, blessed

revivings are granted God's tried people. Yes, there *is* “oil in the dwellings of the *wise*” - virgins (Prov. 21:20). The Lord be pleased to add *His* blessing to this little meditation. - A.W.P.

N.B. This short article is not designed for the searching and exposing of empty professors, but for the establishing and comforting of “the living in Jerusalem.” If the latter will prayerfully re-read its paragraphs and honestly measure themselves by their contents, they should be able to “prove” themselves (2 Cor. 13:5). It is not the absence of sin, nor the decreasing of its power within, which evidences regeneration, but the presence of a contrary and holy principle, which is known by its spiritual longings and efforts.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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October, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *8. Experimental.*

We would ask our readers to please bear with us for writing further on the present aspect of our many-sided subject, namely, the restoration to fellowship with Christ of a backslidden believer. The need for it appears to us so pressing that we feel constrained to make another effort toward helping some of our brethren and sisters who have fallen by the wayside. How many there are who for a year or two seem very earnest and zealous in the Christian life, and then become cold and careless, semi-worldly or weighted down with the cares of this life. Frequently such cases settle down in a state of partial despair: they feel that they are “utter failures,” and conclude that daily communion with Christ is not for such as they. Instead of humbly confessing their failures to the Lord and trustfully seeking pardon and fresh supplies of grace, they go halting and mourning the rest of their days.

We greatly fear that there are not a few of God's dear children who, to a greater or less degree, are held captives by the Devil, and are largely ignorant of the means for recovery. It is the duty of God's servants to seek out such and acquaint them with the provisions of Divine grace: not to make light of sin and excuse backsliding, but to faithfully and tenderly point out how much Christ is being dishonoured and what they are losing by their conduct, and then to set forth the means which God has appointed for their restoration, particularly emphasising the fact we have a great High Priest who has compassion on them that are out of the way (Heb. 5:2), and is willing and able to save unto the uttermost them that come to God by Him (Heb. 7:25).

Perhaps one of our readers says, But the Lord has turned away from me the light of His countenance, and therefore I have much reason to fear that I am not in His favour. Such an objection is answered in the Charter of Grace: “I *will not* turn away them, to do them good” (Jer. 32:40). The Lord has withheld from thee His smile, His comforts, and thou art troubled about it; but that very trouble is for good - it should put thee upon inquiring into the reason for His strangeness toward thee: it should humble thee: it should bring thee into the dust before Him in sincere and contrite confession. And then, thou shouldest exercise thy faith on such a Scripture as this, “For the iniquity of his covetousness was I wroth, and smote him: I hid Me, and was wroth, and he went on forwardly in the way of his heart. I have seen his ways, and will heal him: I will lead him also, and restore comforts unto him” (Isa. 57:17, 18) - it was Fatherly chastisement which smote thee, but His love is unchanged, and He is ready to heal and comfort.

Perhaps another fears that God has not only hidden His face, but has quite forsaken him. He may have done so to thy sense and feeling, yet not so as to His own gracious purpose, which changeth not. Hear how He speaks to thee, distressed one, “For a small moment have I forsaken thee; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid My face from thee for a moment; but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the LORD thy Redeemer” (Isa. 54:7, 8) - how that should silence thy doubts. How gracious is thy God! How infinitely merciful was it that He should give thee such promises, so suited to thy needs, thy case. How well-fitted is such a word as this to preserve thee under the trials of faith and to bring thee out of them. Read it over and over until the clouds of unbelief are dispersed, and thou art again assured that God has a loving and royal welcome for every returning prodigal.

But possibly there is a reader who says, My case is much more desperate. God is incensed against me, and justly so. He has cast me off, and I can expect no more favour at His hands. Once, indeed, I thought that He loved me, and that I loved Him: but I have fouled my garments, fallen into great sin, disgraced my profession. My conscience accuses me of being a dog which has returned to his vomit. I deliberately flouted my privileges, sinned against light, and conviction, and I am verily guilty of that which is not to be found in the truly regenerate. Ah, dear friend, sad indeed as is such a case, yet your language is not that of a reprobate. Thou art fallen into the mire, but are you determined to remain there? You are under a load of guilt, but wilt thou *nurse it*, and so add sin to sin? No matter how vile thy fall, thou canst not be truly humbled for it until thou turnest to God and trustest the plenteous redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Let us anticipate a possible objection at this point: Is it altogether *wise* to speak so freely of the relief available for even a desperate case? None but a self-righteous Pharisee would ask such a question, therefore it is hardly deserving of any answer at all. But for the sake of any who may be perturbed by such a question, let it be pointed out, that there is no subject revealed in Scripture but that the wicked may pervert it (2 Peter 3:16). No matter how carefully the truth be presented, how guarded the language used, how well balanced the presentation, those who are determined to do so will wrest it to their own destruction. It is a great pity that some of God's servants do not recognise this fact more clearly, and act accordingly. They are so afraid that a wrong use may be made of what they say, or that their teaching may be denounced as “dangerous,” that they are muzzled, and often hold back a most needful and precious part “of the children's bread.”

Let us not attempt to be wiser than the Holy Spirit. He hesitates not to tell forth the riches of Divine grace unto the most notorious sinners and the worst backsliders. “My little children, these write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1): here is a guide for us. First, there is a presentation of the exalted standard which God sets before His people, a pressing of the requirements of His holiness. Second, there is a plain declaration of God's gracious provision for those who sadly fail to measure up to His standard, announcing the freeness of Divine mercy. This is the order for us to follow, and this is the “balance” which we are to observe. First, a stressing of God's unchanging claims, with His hatred of all sin; and then the recounting of the gracious provision made for His failing people. “If any one (of His children) sin,” *not* they are cast off by God and forfeit their salvation, but “they have *an Advocate* with the Father.” Naught but the apprehension of this latter fact will melt the backslider's heart.

So it is all through the Scriptures. Take the 6th Chapter of Numbers, which treats of Nazarite dedication to God. There we have in type the *highest* form of separation from carnal delights and devotedness to the Lord, yet even here we find God anticipating *failure* and providing for it: “And if any man die very suddenly by him, and he hath *defiled* the head of his consecration, then he shall shave his head” etc. (vv. 9-12). God knows what we are even after our regeneration, and that there is never a day passes but what we need His pardoning mercy. He knows that while we are left down here, there will always be sin to be confessed, judged, forgiven and put away. And therefore, while He never lowers the requirements of His holiness, yet His grace is ever found amply sufficient for His failing peoples' need, even though that very need be the result of their sins. The preacher is never to excuse sin or lightly regard the declension of saints; yet he must not fail to make clear and present the rich and full provision which a gracious and compassionate God has made for those that wander from Him.

As a further example of what has just been said, let us for a while consider together the precious contents of Hosea 14:1-6. “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the works of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon.” This passage belongs as truly unto spiritual Israel today, as it applied to natural Israel in the past: Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

The name “Israel” is used in Scripture with varying latitude: it has a wider scope when employed nationally, and a narrower when used spiritually. It belongs to all the fleshly descendants of Jacob, but it had a special force unto the elect remnant among them. Inside the Nation as a whole were “Israelites indeed” (John 1:47), concerning whom it was said “Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart” (Psa. 73:1). This distinction is clearly recognised in the New Testament: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly.....but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly” (Rom. 2:28, 29); “Behold Israel *after the flesh*” (1 Cor. 10:18), which clearly implies there is another Israel “after the spirit”! It has helped the writer much to perceive that the Nation of Israel in Old Testament times was a type of Christendom as a whole, and that the godly remnant in that Nation foreshadowed the little flock of the regenerate amid the

great mass of professing Christians.

“O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity” (Hosea 14:1). These words, then, had a wider and a narrower application. They were addressed first to the Nation as a whole; they were spoken secondly to saved individuals in the Nation. Hosea prophesied in very dark times. He lived during the reign of wicked Jeroboam, of whom it is said so often, “he caused Israel to sin”; and while Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahab were over Judah. Idolatry was rampant, yet seven thousand had been preserved from bowing the knee to Baal. History has repeated itself, for our lot is cast in a day when spiritual idolatry is sadly rife, and when many of God's own people are infected and affected by the evil spirit which is abroad. There is much in Hosea 14 which is truly pertinent and of great practical importance for us now. Once we get beneath the different figures there used, their spiritual significance will be readily seen.

“O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity.” How blessedly has God here revealed His desire for backsliders to return unto Himself! The manner in which this call is given is very impressive and heart-melting. “O” is a note of exclamation. It is like one who has done much to help an indigent friend, now surprised and grieved at his base requital, saying, “O John!”; or a devoted husband saying to his unfaithful spouse “O wife!” So God says to those for whom He has done so much, and whose waywardness He has borne with such patience, “O Israel.” It is a note of exclamation addressed to their affections. God does not barely say “Israel, return unto Me,” still less does He gruffly command them so to do; but He tenderly entreats them “O Israel return.” What *love* that expresses!

The backslider must seriously examine his condition and solemnly consider his sad plight. He has forsaken the paths of righteousness; unless he retraces his steps what will his end be! Let him heed, then, this Divine injunction. “Return”: the Hebrew word is very emphatic, yet difficult to reproduce in English - “return *even* unto” or “*quite up to*” is the thought: no partial return will satisfy *His* heart. “Return unto the Lord *thy* God”: unto Him who has taken thee into covenant relationship with Himself, who has shown thee such favours; unto Him who alone can do thee any real good. Return unto the One whom thou hast so grievously wronged, so excuselessly insulted, by allowing forbidden objects to draw away thy heart from Him. “For thou *hast fallen* by thine iniquity” - into spiritual sloth, into sickness of soul, into a joyless state, out of which none but God can lift you. Then return to Him, for none but He can pardon, cleanse, heal, deliver you from the toils of Satan.

But what is meant by “*return unto* the Lord thy God”? First of all it denotes that the backslider honestly and solemnly face the fact that he has departed from the Lord, that he has followed the evil devices of his own heart, yielded to the temptations of the Devil, entered forbidden paths. Second, it signifies that he must now consider his ways and “cease to do evil.” Third, it implies that he judge himself unsparingly for his folly and wickedness, taking sides with God against himself. Fourth, it means that he must humble himself before God, acknowledging his transgressions, confessing his unworthiness, earnestly seeking the Divine mercy. Finally, it includes the setting of his affections again on things above, diligently seeking grace to live as becometh a child of God.

It is not difficult for us to write down what is intended by a “return unto the Lord,” but it is far from easy

for a backslider to carry it out. Satan will make a strenuous effort to retain his victim: if he can no longer allure him with his baits, he will seek to drive him to despair with his accusations, telling him that he has sinned away the day of grace, that he has committed the great transgression, that such high-handed rebellion as he is guilty of is beyond forgiveness; that his case is quite hopeless. Unto any such who may read these lines let us say, Abraham, the father of the faithful, fell into the same sin again and again; David transgressed very grievously; Peter, though definitely forewarned, denied his Master; yet *they* were recovered out of the snare of the Devil. Remember it is written, “The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from *all* sin” (1 John 1:7).

Read through Hosea 13 and note well the condition of Israel at that time: they were guilty of great wickedness, and under the threatening of Divine wrath, yet to them came this tender appeal, “O Israel, return unto the LORD thy God.” How that shows us there are no seasons or circumstances which shall obstruct sovereign grace when God is pleased to exercise it toward His erring people. There is “A fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). That Fountain possesses an infinite virtue to wash away every spot and stain of sin. It is a public Fountain standing available for daily use, that befouled believers may wash therein. Does not God say to His erring people “Their sins and iniquities will I remember no more” (Heb. 10:17): then why reject the comfort of such a promise; it is perfectly suited to thy present distress and is the remedy.

“Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously” (Hosea 14:2). So desirous is God that His backslidden people turn to Him, He here dictates a prayer for their use: the injured One instructs them! Here God graciously makes known the means of recovery, for so ignorant are we of the way of return that we have to be *told* what to do - “we know not what we should pray for as we ought” (Rom. 8:26)! Yet simple as the remedy appears, it is far from easy to carry out: as a child is slow to acknowledge its naughtiness, so pride of heart in a backslider makes him reluctant to own his iniquities. Alas, how many postpone their restoration by delaying their confession; yet it is to their own great loss and harm that they refuse to acknowledge their sins.

The worse be our case, the greater is our need of coming to Christ. On a bitterly cold day the genial heat of a fire can only be enjoyed by our *drawing near to it*; we cannot bask in the warmth of Christ's love while we determine to remain away from Him, hence the “O Israel, *return* unto the LORD thy God” of Hosea 14:1 is at once followed by “Take with you words, and *turn to* the LORD.” No empty “words” will suffice: the whole soul must go out to God, so that out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. The one who is conscious that he has left his first love and has a real purpose to return to the Lord, must definitely look to the Holy Spirit to work in his heart the substance of this prayer, so that it truly voices his deep desires.

But why does God order that we “take with us words”? Is He not fully acquainted with the thoughts and intents of our hearts? Yes, but He requires us to humble ourselves beneath His mighty hand, to take unto ourselves the shame of our fall, to stir us up to *feel* the enormity of our crimes. Say unto him, “Take away all *iniquity*”: *this* is what is to deeply exercise the penitent's heart - that which has so grievously dishonoured the Lord, befouled his own garments, and occasioned such a stumbling block unto his fellows. Repentance is to act itself in prayer, requesting that God will do for us what we cannot do for

ourselves - either remove the guilt and defilement of our sins or subdue their raging within. “Take away” the love of, the bondage of, the pollution of, from heart, conscience and life. “Take away *all* iniquity”: there must be no reservation: all sin is equally burdensome and hateful to a penitent soul.

“And receive us graciously”: faith must individualize it and say “receive *me* graciously”: deal with me not according to my evil deserts but according to Thine infinite mercy; look upon the atoning Blood and pardon me; regard me no longer with displeasure, but grant me fresh tokens of Thy favour and acceptance. “So will we render the calves of our lips,” that is, offer praise unto Thee (Heb. 13:15). The *order* is unchangeable: only as the backslider returns to the Lord, humbles himself before Him, repents of his sins, seeks His forgiveness, is he experimentally fitted to be a *worshipper* once more. God will not accept the praise of rebels!

“Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy” (Hosea 14:3). The force of these words can best be understood by reading Hosea 5:13; 7:11; 8:8, 9; 12:1 - “horses” were what the unbelieving Hebrews put their trust in during times of war. Fleshly confidence and idolatry were *their* two worst sins, and here they are confessed and disowned; so we must acknowledge and renounce (in detail) *our* sins. The “fatherless” are those conscious of their deep need, helplessness, dependency. O turn to Him and find the Lord “a very present help in trouble.”

“I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him” (Hosea 14:4). This is ever God's response to a returning backslider who penitently confesses his sins and truly desires to be delivered from a repetition of them. Sin is a disease which wounds the soul, and only God can “heal” it. When He loves us “freely” “He manifests himself to” us (John 14:21). “I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily” (Hosea 14:5): “dew” comes from above, falls insensibly, cooling the air, refreshing vegetation, making fruitful: it is a beautiful figure of the Spirit's *renewing* the restored believer, granting him fresh supplies of grace. The “lily” speaks of lowliness, purity, fragrance. “And cast forth his roots as Lebanon” (v. 5), that is, be more firmly fixed in the love of Christ, and so less easily swayed by the customs of the world and assaults of Satan. “His beauty shall be as the olive tree” useful and fruitful; “and his smell (the fragrance he emits) as Lebanon” (v. 6): a restored Christian is a joy to God's servants and an encouragement to his brethren - (see v. 7), others are encouraged to “return.” O what inducements are here set before the backslider *to* “turn unto the LORD”: yet *faith* must be exercised so as to *appropriate* the precious promises of verses 4-8. - A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **Union and Communion.**

#### *9. Glory*

This present life, with its continual mixture of good and evil, joy and sorrow, with its constant fluctuations and disappointments, naturally prompts a reflecting mind to the belief and hope of a future life that will be more perfect and permanent; yet that is as far as the unaided intellect can project us. A Divine revelation is indispensable if we are to learn *how* Heaven is to be reached, and of *what* its blessedness consists. By the fall of the first Adam paradise was lost, and only through the last Adam can sinners be restored unto God, and only by the supernatural operations of the Spirit can the hearts of depraved men be fitted for and their steps be directed along the sole way which conducts to the mansions in the Father's House. Vain is human reasoning, worthless the efforts of imagination, when it comes to obtaining a knowledge of that antitypical Canaan which flows with spiritual milk and honey. How thankful, then, should we be for the Word of Prophecy and the light it supplies while we are in this dark world.

That blessed light has been enjoyed by God's elect from earliest times. "As for me (said the Psalmist), I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness" (Psa. 17:15). Here was the blessed sequel to Jehovah's response unto Moses: "show me Thy glory" had been his request, "thou canst not see My face (in *this* life), for there shall no man see Me, and live" was the Divine response (Exo. 33:18-20). But what is, necessarily, denied the saints now, shall be granted them in the future. While in this world indwelling sin raises an insuperable barrier, incapacitating the soul to discern more than a few broken rays of the Divine splendour. But when we "awake," on the Resurrection-morn, and sin and

the grave are left behind, then will the soul be fitted for the beatific vision, for “the pure in heart shall see God” (Matt. 5:8), see Him then as they cannot now.

When David said “I will behold Thy face” he had reference to an *objective* glory, and that, in its most perfect representation; for the “*face*” is the principal part of our persons wherein physical beauty and moral dignity are displayed. When he added “I shall be satisfied with Thy *likeness*,” a different concept is before him, another factor is introduced - one which must necessarily enter into the equation of soul *satisfaction*. The most vivid display of the Divine glory, so far from satisfying, will only terrify those who are not *in inward harmony therewith*, as is evident from Revelation 6:16, etc. No sight of God can satisfy any one unless and until his soul be conformed to the Divine image and attuned thereto. Thus we understand the Psalmist to mean, “Hereafter I shall behold the blessed face of God, and be regaled thereby; not only by the vision itself, but because of its transfusing itself upon me, transforming me.” It is a Divine glory both revealed and received.

The same wondrous truth is set forth in the New Testament. “For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed *in us*” (Rom. 8:18); “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). The future glory of the saints, then, is not only a *realm* of light and bliss into which they are yet to be conducted, and an *objective* (outward) splendour which will rejoice their hearts, but it is also a glory to be “revealed *in them*,” a “weight of glory” *upon* them. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed into* the same image, from glory to glory, by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Cor. 3:18); the final and perfect degree of this occurring in their resurrection state, at their glorification. All of this is summed up in “When He shall appear, we shall be like Him; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2).

There is a most striking and blessed parallel between the last-quoted verse and our opening Scripture. The Psalmist said, “When I awake,” the Apostle declares “when He shall appear” - the *same* time-mark or occasion. “I will behold Thy face in righteousness” (i.e., none but a righteous person will enjoy this holy privilege): “*we shall see Him*” - the *same* persons, namely, the “sons of God,” of whom it is said in the context “every one that doeth *righteousness* is born of Him” (1 John 2:29)! “I will behold Thy face” says David, “We shall see Him as He is” says John - the *same* blessed Object. “I shall be satisfied with Thy (transforming) likeness....we shall be like He” - the *same* blessed assimilation. What an example of the perfect unity of the Scriptures! What a proof that the Old Testament saints were favoured with the same light as we are!

Yet notwithstanding the revelation God has vouchsafed us of the life to come, how feebly do we grasp that revelation, how dimly do we comprehend its details; how infinitely it transcends the highest conceptions we can form of it. What we now know of God and His Christ is as nothing to what we shall yet know of Him, yea, in comparison with *that* it scarcely deserves to be called “knowledge”: “For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face; now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12). The fact is that mere language cannot convey to us in our present state any adequate idea of the glory which God has provided for His people. But though a full discovery thereof is reserved till the time of actual possession, yet enough is hinted at to nourish our hopes and gladden our hearts. To make

this the more evident unto the reader, let us endeavour to amplify our statement by a presentation of some considerations. We may now form some conception of the Church's future glory.

*From the contrast pointed by our present afflictions.* That the future bliss of believers is exceedingly great is clear from “For our *light* affliction which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17). Now we know that the sufferings of God's people in this world are, considered in themselves, *heavy* afflictions, yea, to some of them, grievously heavy. If, then, the trials and sorrows of the most afflicted among the saints are “light” when contrasted with their future happiness, how great must that happiness be! The paucity of human language to express the ineffable joys and pleasures awaiting us at God's right hand, is seen in the piling up of one term upon another: it is a “weight,” it is an “exceeding weight,” it is a “far more exceeding weight,” it is an “eternal weight of glory.”

*From the reward promised the saints.* This is frequently exhibited under the animating figure of the *crowns* bestowed upon the victors in the Grecian games and upon the military conquerors when they arrived back home in triumph. In those games the great men of the times entered as competitors for the glory of victory, and even kings thought themselves honoured by obtaining the prize. The victor was rewarded with a crown of leaves, and was received with unbounded honour by the vast multitudes assembled. Now, after all the self-denials in their training, the unwearied diligence in preparatory exercises, the toils and dangers endured in the arduous struggle, they deemed *this reward* a rich recompense, for it raised them to a pinnacle of glory to be viewed with admiration by all their fellows. Yet, *they* had in view “a corruptible crown,” whereas *we* are striving for an “incorruptible” one (1 Cor. 9:24, 25). Their crown was the greatest honour this world could bestow, and soon faded and withered. But the Christian's crown shall be bestowed *by God*, and bloom with unfading freshness throughout eternity; and its glory will be viewed by all the principalities of Heaven.

*From the scattered hints of Scripture.* These are numerous: from them we select two: “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as *the stars* for ever and ever” (Dan. 12:3). O ye despised followers of the Lamb, groaning under the reproach of the Cross, lift up your eyes and view this glorious prospect. Behold the heavens studded with their scintillating gems; see those bright orbs darting forth their light; and that is but a faint image of your future glory! “Then shall the righteous shine forth as *the sun* in the kingdom of their Father” (Matt. 13: 43). What object in nature is so glorious as the sun? Who can look on the brightness of his beams? Who can measure the extent and distance of his shining? Such shall be your glory, ye servants of the Lord, who despise the tinsel glory of this world through faith in the Word.

*From our relationship to God.* We may surely be assisted in estimating the future glory of Christians by the *titles* bestowed upon them from that connection. They are called the children and heirs of God, and it is not possible for the Almighty to invest created beings with a higher honour than that. There is a sense in which both angels and man are, by creation, the sons of God; but it is in a far more intimate and precious sense that believers are called God's *children*. He hath “begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3); “We are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26). We are the children of God, then, as we are *the brethren* of His only begotten Son, and that places us above the highest of the angels. And because we are children, we are the “heirs of God”

(Rom. 8:17). O ye tried and troubled saints, who are having such a sore struggle to make ends meet, it shall not always be thus with you. Estimate the inheritance of saints by the riches of God Himself!

*From what is said in Ephesians 2:6, 7.* “And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us through Christ Jesus” - “show” to the heavenly hierarchies. If, then, God intends to make a lavish display of the wealth of His love toward His people, how surpassingly glorious will be such an exhibition! “When the Monarch of the Universe, the God of power and wisdom, declares His purpose of showing how much He loves His people, the utmost stretch of imagination will in vain struggle to form even a slight conception of their glory. All the thrones of Heaven will be filled with wonder, when they behold in their glory 'the men whom their King delights to honour” (Alex Carson to whom we are also indebted for part of the above).

*From the love of Christ for them.* Surely that will enable us to form some estimate of the future condition of the saints in glory. Of His immeasurably great love for His people we have the fullest proof in His humiliation and death. Read the history of it, ponder the depths of degradation and ignominy into which the Lord of Glory descended, behold Him despised and rejected of men, an outcast from society, and at last a willing sacrifice for His people's sins, and that, even while they were enemies; and then ask yourself, what is *the extent* of His love? It defies description; it is beyond comprehension. Now if He loved us so while enemies, what will He not confer on us as His friends and brethren! Paul taught us to pray that we “might be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth and length, and depth and height, and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.” If, then, it is a matter of such importance to *know* His love, and if the extent of it is beyond knowledge, what is likely to be the height of glory to which its objects are elevated!

*From the reward bestowed on Christ.* In John 17:22 we hear Him speak of “the glory which Thou hast given Me.” What is the “glory” which the Father bestows upon the Mediator? It is *the Divine reward* for His stupendous achievements. It is that whereby His infinite merits shall be suitably recompensed throughout eternity. And what a glory that must be: answerable to the dignity of His Person, answerable to the revenue of honour and praise which He has brought unto God, commensurate with the unspeakable sacrifice which He made and with the worth of Him that made it! And when *God* gives, He does so in accordance with who He is. O what a “glory,” then, must it be with which the Father has rewarded His beloved Son: a transcendent and supernal glory. And that “glory” Christ shares with His redeemed: “And the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have *given them*” (John 17:22). Thus, there is a *union in glory* between the Church and its Head.

This it is which is the most wondrous and blessed aspect of our many-sided subject. This it is which is the grand goal which all the other unions between the Redeemer and the redeemed had in view, namely, an everlasting union in glory. And this it is which best enables us to conceive of and estimate the marvel, the grandeur, the uniqueness, of this glory union, namely, that it is the very glory which the Father had given to the Darling of His bosom, and which Christ will share with those whom He loved with a love that was stronger than death. “But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and

belief of the truth: whereunto He called you by our Gospel, to the obtaining of (not simply “glory,” but) *the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thess. 2:13, 14) - *that* was what God had in mind for His people in eternity past: nothing less would satisfy His heart.

Of old it was revealed “the LORD will give grace and glory” (Psa. 84:11). Here upon earth the saints enjoy Christ in a way of real fellowship, but in Heaven they shall enjoy Him in another and higher manner. Here Christ communicates Himself to them in a way of *grace*, so that their present communion with Him and communications from Him are suited to them as they are sinners in themselves. As thus considered, the Redeemer in His infinite goodness holds fellowship with His feeble and constantly-failing people, and as their *Head of grace* He ministers out of His fullness (John 1:16) every needed supply. But in Heaven He will be our *Head of Glory*, communicating to us that which will be suited to our resurrection and sinless state. We shall be as dependent on Him then for glory, as we now are for grace: *all* will be received *from Him*. The elect are “*vessels of mercy*” which God hath “afore prepared unto glory” (Rom. 9:23), and it is out of Christ's fullness they will be *filled*, so as to be perfectly blessed.

It is to be noted that in John 17:22 Christ employed the past tense: “the glory which Thou gavest Me, I have given (not “will give”) them.” This may be understood as follows. First, Christ has given the Church an unimpeachable *title* to the glory which has been bestowed upon Him. He has acquired the right of this glory for His people: “whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:20): thus it is as surely ours now as if we were in actual possession of it. Second, He has given His people the *knowledge* of it: here in John 17:22, and in such declarations as Colossians 3:4, etc. - “When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory.” The promises Christ has given us in His Gospel are the root of our future blessings, and in those promises we have *a lease* to show for it. Third, He has given us *an earnest* of the same, for by the indwelling Spirit we have received the “firstfruits” of our inheritance. This it was which enabled the Apostle to say I am “a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a *partaker* of the glory that shall be revealed” (1 Peter 5:1). Fourth, He gives an actual enjoyment of it to each of the saints as soon as they are absent from the body and present with Himself.

Finally, Christ in this remarkable verse (John 17:22) gives as the reason why He shares with His people the glory which the Father hath bestowed upon Himself: “that they may be one even as We are.” Here our thoughts are directed to such a height that our poor minds turn dizzy. The very reading of those words should fill our hearts with holy amazement, as the actualization of them will fill us with admiration to all eternity. The oneness between the Father and the Son is such that They *partake of the same* ineffable blessedness, Each enjoying it equally with and like the Other. And *that* is the pattern and likeness, by way of similitude, of the glory union between the Redeemer and the redeemed! Ours will be like *Theirs*! As the union between the Father and the Son is a real one, a spiritual one, a holy one, an indestructible one, an inexpressibly glorious one, so will be that between Christ and His Church in Heaven.

As we showed in our discussion on Divine union, there is a real union of Persons in the Godhead and a communion amongst Them, for the mutual converse between the eternal Three are recorded again and again. Now just as the essential happiness of the Three in Jehovah consists in the holy fellowship which They have with each other, so it will be by the Church's heavenly communion with the Father, the Son and the Spirit, in and by the Person of the Mediator, that all true blessedness will be enjoyed by us throughout

eternity. Even now the saints are admitted unto access to the Father, by the Spirit, through Christ (Eph. 2:18); yet in our glory union with Christ this will be exalted to a far higher degree and we shall be advanced unto much closer and fuller communion with the triune God. “And the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them; that they may be one, even as We are one” (John 17:22).

“I in them, and Thou in Me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that Thou hast sent Me, and hast loved them, as Thou hast loved Me” (John 17:23). In these words the nature and blessedness of the glory union between Christ and the Church are further opened to us, its blessedness being indicated by the several effects and fruits which flow from the same. Three of these are here noted. First, as that union will affect believers themselves: they are “made perfect in one” Body. Then will all the redeemed “come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect Man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13). All differences of opinion, all animosities, all jealousies, shall have vanished forever, and there shall be perfect oneness between them in knowledge, love, and holiness. Second, as this union affects the Church, in connection with the triune God. Being united to Christ, the elect are necessarily united to and interested in all the Persons in Jehovah and as they now have a *grace union* with Them, they shall yet have a *glory union* with Them, which will issue in a communion that will constitute the fullness of their blessedness for ever and ever.

Third, as it affects “the world of the ungodly.” Those who have no part or lot in this glory union shall, nevertheless, be given a glimpse of the same, as Dives (for the augmenting of his torment) was permitted to see “Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom” (Luke 16:23). The sight of Christ's “Queen,” standing at His right hand (Psa. 45:9 and cf. Matt. 25:34) “in gold of Ophir” - figure of His glory - will be self-convicting to the reprobate that Christ is what He declared Himself to be; and as they behold the honour which God has put upon the Church, it will openly appear that He has loved them as He loved their Head. And for having despised and rejected Christ, and reproached and persecuted His people, they will be filled with confusion and everlasting shame (Dan. 12:2). But the Church shall be filled with joy unspeakable and have everlasting proof of the wondrous love of God for them. - A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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### **Humility.**

Observe O my soul what an honour God has put upon *this* grace: “Before honour is humility” (Prov. 15:33)! Whom God honours, He humbles first. He gives grace to the humble, because the humble give Him all the glory. The highest throne which He has upon earth is in the humblest heart. To it He vouchsafes His constant presence and makes the greatest communications of His love: “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isa. 57:15). O what an honour is here promised to the humble! The greatest they can have on this side of Heaven. God will dwell with them; and what a blessing! And His temple shall be in the humble heart. The high and holy One passes by what is in the highest esteem amongst men. He stains the pride of human greatness and goodness. He does not vouchsafe to set up His throne with the princes, nor to give His honour to the learned of the world. But He puts honour upon *the contrite and humble*. He condescends to visit them; yea, He delights to dwell with them, and in them - the Highest above all heavens in the lowest hearts. There He communicates His choicest love and richest favours. O my God! bestow upon me this grace, which in Thy sight is so precious. Humble me, that I may be revived with Thy presence, and refreshed daily with Thy love. Give me more humility, and fit me for nearer fellowship with Thee. Bring down every high thought, and let me find it true, that You resisteth the proud, but giveth more grace unto *the humble*.

Thus the true poverty of spirit is needful, not only to bring the sinner to Christ, but also to preserve the

believer in communion with Him; for so long as he walks by faith, every thing will tend to promote this communion. In the daily sense of his wants, he will go to his bountiful Saviour for a supply. In the feeling of his misery, He will depend on his loving Saviour for relief; whereby he will be led to more intercourse with Him. What he finds wrong in himself will bring him to live more by faith, and as faith increases, so will his delight in God. He will grow more sensible of his weakness, and that will make him stronger in the Lord. He will know more of his own heart, which will humble him, and keep him dependent on the grace of Jesus. He will see reason not to lean to his own understanding, but ever to pray, Lord guide me by Thy good Spirit. Viewing spots and blemishes in his best doings, his triumph will be, "I will make mention of Thy righteousness, Lord Jesus, even of Thine *only*" (Psa. 71:16). Thus every thing will humble him, and lead him to live more by faith: by which means he will get faster hold of Christ, live in nearer fellowship, and be receiving out of his fullness "grace for grace" - two graces at once: the blessings needed and thankfulness for them. Hereby a sweet intercourse will be kept open.

To the humble, God delights to give grace, and they delight to return Him His glory. The more He gives, the more glory would they gladly return. And He does give more, and He receives it back again in thanks and praise. Blessed grace! by which this holy fellowship is maintained. Happy humility! by which the heart, being emptied of self, is made capable of receiving the fullness which is of God. Then is the promise fulfilled, "Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3) - it is theirs now: not only in title, but also in possession, for the kingdom of God is within them and they are partakers *at present* of its blessings and glories as truly, though not so perfectly, as they will be in Heaven. Meditate, O my soul, upon this Divine grace. Thou seest the necessity of it: O pray earnestly for it, and for more of it. The great idol *self* must be dethroned where God reigns. Thou canst not walk with Him unless thou art humble in heart. And if thou hast been walking with Him, thou wilt be taught to stop, whenever thou beginnest to look at self with admiration. O beg of the Lord, then, to give thee the true Gospel poverty of spirit. It is to be in constant practice, and used for everything; for thou seest how it keeps up fellowship with God, who makes the greatest communications of Himself to the humblest. And the reason is plain; because they return Him all His glory. If therefore thou wouldest have much grace in exercise, pray for much *humility*. O my God! whatever Thou givest, give humility with it, that I may not seek self in it, but Thine honour, nor lay it out upon myself, but to Thy glory. Meek and lowly Jesus, make me like Thyself; keep me learning of Thee, till I am perfectly like Thee. I would come always poor to Thee, to receive of Thy riches, and to receive with them *an humble heart* to praise Thee for them. O let Thy glory be mine end and aim. Let me and mine be Thine: I humbled, Thou exalted. Let Thy graces and gifts bring Thee in a constant revenue of praise. And may Thine increasing goodness be joined with a constant increase of humility, that my heart and all within me may bless and praise Thy holy name, today and forever. Amen.

And let this appear in my whole behaviour *to others*. This is another blessed fruit of humility: it has an influence over the believer's intercourse with mankind, and renders his tempers and manners loving and amiable. Pride was not made for man, and yet it is in all men, and is the chief parent of human woe. It sets people above their place, and makes them think they could support the greatest fortunes, and are able to manage the most difficult affairs. Others, as proud as they, deny them their fancied superiority. Hence come wars and fightings, public and private. The sweet grace of *humility* is sent from Heaven to relieve those distresses; for into whatsoever bosom it enters, it renders men kind to one another, tender-hearted, ready to every good word and work. Thus runs the Divine exhortation, "Be kindly affectioned one to

another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Rom. 12:10). This is heart-humility, which the Holy Spirit requires, and which He bestows. He brings His disciples into humble subjection to God, then to one another; which has the most happy effects upon public, social, and private happiness. But would these flourish, if all men were of a meek and quiet spirit! But there is none of this among the unconverted; and, alas, how little is there among believers! How often are they found in the proud spirit of the world! acting contrary to the lowly spirit of Jesus. And yet it is not for want of precepts, nor for want of promised help; but it is because they are not walking by faith, as becometh the Gospel, nor out of love to God's glory studying to recommend humility by their practice.

Observe, O my soul, *the remedy* provided of God for the subduing of all selfish tempers, and pray that it may be effectual in thy life and conversation. Do you think that the Scripture, saith in vain, “The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But He giveth more grace. Wherefore He saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:5, 6). This Scripture cannot speak in vain; for fallen man is certainly such as he is here described. The spirit that dwelleth in him, in his own nature, lusteth to envy - a passion made up of pride and discontent, offended with God, and displeased with the blessings which He bestows upon men. It is an enemy to the love both of God and man, and transgresses the Law of both tables. Pride brought it into Heaven, and the fallen angels brought it into this world. Ever since it entered by sin, natural corruption breaks out very much in *envy*. But God giveth more grace to conquer this passion, than sinful nature has to put it forth. He not only gives grace to pardon it, but also more grace to subdue it; so that envy loses its dominion in the reign of grace. We cannot subdue it, any more than we can pardon envy, pride, and such passions; but grace is almighty. What ever so much, use ever so much, God has still more for you. And He gives more, when the creature *is humbled enough* to take it out of the hands of His mercy. Thus he overcomes envy; “for He resisteth the proud” - He is at open war with them, and they with Him.

Pride lifts up the creature against the Creator, and puts it upon seeking happiness out of God; this is resisting His sovereignty, attacking His providence, and opposing His Law. He is concerned to pull such rebels down, and He says their pride goeth before destruction. But “He giveth grace unto *the humble*”: He gives them grace to humble them, and being emptied, He delights to fill them; for then they are disposed to receive His grace and to value it. Whatever God gives, the humble give it back again to Him. They have the blessing, He has the praise: which is the just tribute due to Him for His gifts. And He gives more grace where He can get more glory. Thus He subdues self-conceit, with its various proud workings. And as grace reigns over them, humility prevails; which has a friendly aspect towards mankind. It keeps brotherly love in the heart, and tends mightily to the practice of every social virtue. Humility suffereth long and is kind; humility envieth not; humility vaunteth not itself; is not puffed up; doth not behave itself unseemly; seeketh not her own; is not easily provoked; thinketh no evil. - W. Romaine, 1770.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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December, 1936

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *9. Glory.*

We cannot do better than commence here at the point where we closed in our last, for nowhere in Scripture do we have such a clear and blessed revelation of the Church's future bliss as the Lord Jesus favoured us with in John 17. "Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am: that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world" (v. 24). Every word in this verse calls for separate meditation. Once more the Redeemer says, "Father," for He is suing for a child's portion for each of His people: it is not simply wages, such as a servant receives from his master, but an inheritance, such as children receive from their parents—the inheritance being the Father's house, where the Son now is. He had said "Father" when asking for His own glorification (v. 5), and He does so again in connection with the glorification of His saints: addressing God thus intimated the loving intensity of the Mediator's intercession.

Christ's "I will" here at once arrests our notice—the only record we have of His ever addressing the Father thus, yet it was in as perfect keeping now as His "not My will" in Gethsemane. First, this "I will" was a note of *authority* which became Him who is God and man in one Person, to whom had been committed "power over all flesh" (John 17:2). Moreover, He had a perfect knowledge of the Father's will, and as the Surety of His people, Christ was here suing for the fulfillment of that covenant agreement which had been entered into before He embarked upon His great undertaking. Second, it was a *testamentary disposition*: Christ was about to die and therefore said "I will." "When Christ made His will, Heaven is one of the

legacies which He bequeathed to us” (T. Manton). The same thought is found again in “I appoint unto you a kingdom, as My Father hath appointed unto Me” (Luke 22:29). Third, it also reveals His deep earnestness and full purpose of heart, as the “Master, we *would* that Thou shouldst do for us whatsoever we shall desire” (Mark 10:35).

“That they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” Nothing gives a lover such a joy and satisfaction as to be in the immediate presence of his beloved. Heaven will not be Heaven to Christ until His glorified Bride is there by His side: then only will He “see of the travail of his soul and shall *be satisfied*” (Isa. 53:11). Nothing will content the heart of the Head but that His Church should be brought unto the possession of the utmost blessedness, to be continued unto and enjoyed by them forever and ever. It was so that His people might have a clear and comforting knowledge of this that He gave them that exceeding great and precious promise “I go to prepare a place for you: and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also” (John 14:2, 3). How this reveals the heart-attitude of Christ unto us!

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.” That is in sharp and solemn contrast from “where I am, thither ye cannot come” (John 7:34), spoken to the unbelieving Jews. The wicked have no title, no fitness, no heart to be where Christ is: Paradise is still closed against them by the flaming sword (Gen. 3:24). But it will be the consummation of the believer's happiness to be where Christ is: as the Psalmist declared, “In Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (16:11). How utterly different is the attitude of Christ toward His own from that of many of this world, who, when they enter suddenly into earthly riches and honours, quickly forget the fellows and friends of former days. Not so the Lord Jesus: His heavenly glory does not cause His love to decay in the least degree or take His mind off His people. They are inexpressibly precious to Him, and He cannot be content unless they are with Him.

It is as though Christ said to the Father, As given to Me by Thee, the elect are My “portion” (Deut. 32:9), My “special treasure” (Mal. 3:17, margin), My “royal diadem” (Isa. 62:3), My “joy” (Zeph. 3:17): and as their Head and Mediator I express My will, and it is that they shall be raised to the highest pinnacle that it is possible to elevate creatures, that they may be where I am, and that, not in some distant compartment of Thy House, but in My immediate presence, so that they may behold My glory—feasting their eyes and feeding their hearts upon Myself. Surely nothing can convey to our minds, under the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a clearer view of the heart of Christ toward His beloved. O that the blessed Comforter may so shine upon these words of Christ's, and thereby let in such light into our understandings, as may lift our hearts unto a clearer comprehension and greater admiration of His love than we have ever had before.

“That they may behold My glory.” This beholding is, first *ocular*. The bodily senses have their happiness as well as the faculties of our souls, and this will be realised in a far nobler and purer degree hereafter. Job affirmed thus when he said, “Though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold” (19:26, 27)—“see God” in the Person of the God-man Mediator. The saints shall then behold the Person who redeemed them, and that nature in which He suffered so much for them. The outward man will be regaled, as truly as the inner. There is a glory to charm our eyes in Heaven: not only the beautiful mansions and the glorious inhabitants, but above

all, *the face of the Lamb*. As it is now said of Christ Himself, so shall it yet be the experience of each of His people: “For Thou hast made Him most blessed forever: Thou hast made Him exceeding glad with Thy countenance” (Psa. 21:6).

This beholding is, secondly, and supremely, *mental and spiritual*. The mind is the noblest faculty, for man is a rational creature, and there is as great an inclination to knowledge in his soul as there is in beasts to carnal pleasures. The drunkard may talk of his delight and the voluptuary of the gratification of sense, but the true delight of the soul is *knowledge*, and therefore it must be satisfied in Heaven, or else we would not be happy. “The pure in heart shall see God” (Matt. 5:8), yet not with the bodily eye, for He who is “Spirit” (John 4:24) cannot be viewed by the bodily senses, and therefore is He called “the invisible God” (Col. 1:15). But God has given man, in preference to the beasts, a mind which is capable of knowing Himself, and in our glorified state our knowledge of Him will be immeasurably increased, so that the soul shall be perfectly satisfied with its mental and spiritual sight of Him.

What an affecting sight it will be to behold the glory of Christ! How it will ravish the heart! Abraham was favoured with an anticipatory glimpse of it and “was glad” (John 8:56). If old Simeon was contented with a view of Christ as an infant—“Lord, *now* lettest Thou Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word: for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:29, 30)—what will be the effect on us when we stand before His very throne! Even now it fills the soul with joy unspeakable when faith and spiritual illumination beholds Him in the Word and through His ordinances, but words cannot express what it will be to behold the Lord in open vision. To behold the King in His beauty, to see the Lamb “as it had been slain” (Rev. 5:6)—still bearing in His body the marks of the Cross—will fill us with thanksgiving and praise.

But this glory which the saints are to behold is also a *Divine* one: it will be the luster of the Divine perfections which will be revealed to us through and by Christ, every attribute of God supplying a part, all combining to make up this supreme spiritual splendour. Then will God's unsearchable *wisdom* be more completely opened to us, for in Christ “are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3). Then will God's illimitable *power* be more fully discovered to us: that power which created a universe out of nothing, that preserved His little flock in the midst of a world of wolves, that will make a footstool of all His enemies. Then will God's *holiness* be known in all its loveliness, and joyfully shall we then unite with the angels in crying “holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts.” Then will God's *love* be seen without a veil: His smile shall never again be checked with a frown, nor the light of His countenance be obscured by any intervening cloud of sin.

Not till the glorified Church reaches Heaven will its union with God in Christ be complete. Union implies more than *relation*: it imports actual *presence*; not physical or local, but spiritual and cordial, by which the sinless soul, with will and affections guided by restored reason and judgment, closes with and embraces Him; and He in fulfillment of the eternal counsels, and with infinite love and delight, embraces her. When the soul is perfectly formed according to God's own heart and fully participates in the Divine likeness so as to be perfectly like Him, it is fitted for the most intimate communion which is possible between two such natures—the Divine and human. Nor can pen depict the holy bliss of glorified saints from such a love-union, now perfected between the blessed God and them. The likeness of God upon a creature will cause

the eternal One to cleave in love to it, and the beholding of His glory by eyes from which the film of sin has been completely removed will make the soul embrace Him as its ravishing portion.

From that love-union in glory will issue everlasting *communion*. “There is nothing there to hinder God and the holy soul of the most inward fruitions and enjoyments; no animosity, no strangeness, no unsuitableness on either part. Here the glorified spirits of the just have liberty to solace themselves amid the rivers of pleasure at God's own right hand, without check or restraint. *They* are pure, and *these* pure. They touch nothing that can defile, they defile nothing they can touch. They are not now forbidden the nearest approaches to the once inaccessible Majesty; there is no holy of holies into which they may not enter, no door locked against them. They may have free admission into the innermost secret of the Divine presence, and pour forth themselves in the most liberal effusions of love and joy; as they must be the eternal subjects of those infinitely richer communications from God, even of immense and boundless love and goodness” (J. Howe, “The Blessedness of the Righteous,” 1668).

“Father, I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am; that they may behold My glory, which Thou hast given Me: for Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world” (John 17:24). In the last clause Christ tells the Father *why* He wills that His elect should be with Him and behold His glory. As the God-man, the Man taken into personal union by the Son, and as such the “Fellow” (Zech. 13:7) of Jehovah, He was, from all eternity, the Object of the Father's ineffable love. He was conceived in the Divine mind before all worlds, being the “Firstborn” of all God's thoughts, counsels, designs toward all beings, visible and invisible. Christ, as God-man, was the Centre and Circumference as it respected all God's vast designs in grace, nature and providence. Christ's Person is infinitely precious in God's sight, and therefore has He placed the highest honour of all upon Him as being the Medium through which the invisible God shall shine forth for all eternity, for *thereby* the Church will perceive *how much* the Father loves Christ and that it is the overflowings of the same which falls on them.

“I will, therefore, that they may behold My personal glory, which Thou has given Me, that from that sight they may have the most enlarged views their minds are capable of, concerning Thy love to Me, and to them in Me, as this will be a perfecting them in the full enjoyment of Thine everlasting love. Thou hast possessed *My* mind with it from everlasting; Thou hast taken *Me* up into the mount of personal union and communion with Thee. I have shone forth before Thee in all My personal glory. I have been in Thy bosom, and been admitted into a full knowledge and enjoyment of all the love of Thine heart. Thou lovedst Me from everlasting, and My whole Person, God-man, is the Object of Thine everlasting love. Thou lovedst Me as the Son of God, and as the Son of Man; Thou lovedst Me before the foundation of the world as the Head of the whole election of grace. Thou lovedst Me as Mediator. I am in every sense the Object of Thy love. I would open Thy whole heart to these, Thine, and My beloved ones. I would express it unto them most freely. I would speak out in their hearing the secrets which have passed from everlasting between Thee and Me, that *they may have* the clearest evidence I can give them of it” (S. E. Pierce).

The Lord Christ will shine forth in His personal glory in the view of His saints, and it will be so beheld by them as to be reflected upon them. Our glory in Heaven will not be independent of Christ, nor will it be inherent in ourselves: our everlasting bliss will be received out of the fullness of the Lord of glory. Just as the glory of the sun is subjective in itself, but objective upon others, so it will be in Heaven: we shall be

bathed in the effulgence of Him who is Light. We shall be favoured with such views of Christ, as God-man, as will forever preclude any possibility of sinning, for our souls will be satiated with *His* perfections, filled with unutterable admiration and adoration. We shall be so completely swallowed up with Christ that we shall no longer have any thought about *ourselves!* *This it is* which constitutes the very essence of heavenly blessedness: we shall be so thoroughly absorbed with the loveliness of the Lamb as to forever lose sight of, forget, ourselves! The Church will so centre in God as their Portion and Inheritance that communion with Him, through His Christ, will be the fountain of their life for evermore.

Our thoughts have carried us along so swiftly that we must now go back and consider the several steps in the believer's history which is to terminate in this blessed consummation. The first step or stage occurs at *regeneration*, when he is made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light, for it is then there is wrought in him a principle (or “nature”) which capacitates his (hitherto depraved) soul to visualize and relish spiritual things. A beggar might gaze upon the glory of a king, and yet be no gainer; but when a regenerated soul looks in faith unto the crucified and risen Saviour he is “saved” thereby (Isa. 45:22). The second step or stage in the soul's journey unto the beatific vision occurs in its practical *sanctification*, which is a gradual process and progressive experience, under which, beholding in the glass of the Law and the Gospel the glory of the Lord, he is changed into “the same image” by the Spirit (2 Cor. 3:18).

Third, it is *at death* the believer approaches much nearer the goal so longed for by his soul, for then he not only leaves this world behind, but he is forever done with sin—he leaves *it* behind too. Welcome release! How that should reconcile him to the putting off of the body! Passing strange is it from the spiritual side of things—though not so from the natural—that the great majority of Christians are as reluctant to leave this world as are the godless, and view with such trepidation the valley of the shadows. Not only is there nothing whatever to be feared in death to the saints—for Christ has extracted its sting—but there is much in it and its attendants that should make it welcome. Sin—that plague of the renewed heart, that monster which is the cause of all our spiritual grief, that vile thing which is ever marring and interrupting our communion with God—will be done with forever. And being done with sin, there will be *an end* to all physical sufferings and mental sorrows. The entail of the first Adam will be finally severed. But this—grand as it is—is but the negative side; consider the positive.

As soon as the Lord is pleased to dismiss any of His saints from the body by death, they are *immediately admitted into Heaven*, and there they behold His glory. Christ's glory is great in the estimation of His people: they have a spiritual perception of it now, but they will have a much greater and grander view of it when removed from this vale of tears, when they are “absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8). Therefore was it that the Apostle exclaimed, “Having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is *far better*” (Phil. 1:23). Heaven is the habitation of all saints upon their departure from this world, and then they shall enjoy a fellowship with God through Christ which greatly exceeds any they are capable of now. At best our present communion with Christ is but feeble and fitful; but it will not be so always: in the intermediate state the redeemed are with Christ and receive wondrous “revelations” (2 Cor. 12:7) from Him.

“Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth” (Rev. 14:13): not “shall be,” but “blessed *are*” they—a Divine declaration which gives the lie to that Christ-dishonouring idea which supposes that

at death the souls of believers, in common with unbelievers, pass into a state of oblivion. Yes, “blessed” beyond words are they who die in the Lord, for not only do they leave all sin behind forever, but they are “with Christ in Paradise” (Luke 23:43). True, that blessedness falls short of the final state, nevertheless, in various respects it approximates thereto. There is much in common for believers between death and resurrection, and after the resurrection, though the latter excels the former. Both are termed a “crown” (Rev. 2:10—immediately after death; 2 Tim. 4:8—at the latter day), both are a being “present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8; 1 Thess. 4:17). Both are termed a “sight of Christ” (2 Cor. 5:6, 7)—while in the body we walk by faith, but when absent from the body and present with the Lord, walking by sight is necessarily implied: 1 John 3:2.

Yet great and grand as is the blessedness of the dead in Christ, that which they will enjoy in the resurrection and eternal state shall far surpass it. To the question “How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come?” the inspired answer is returned, “Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die; and that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other. . . . So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption, it is raised in incorruption; it is sown in dishonour, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body” (1 Cor. 15:35-37, 42-44). What a difference are we here taught to expect between the present and the future state of our bodies. From one view, the body that rises is the same that died—personal identity is preserved; but from another view, it is radically changed.

More than a hint of that marvelous change of the believer's body is found in the record of Christ's transfiguration, when “His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light” (Matt. 17:2), and when after His own resurrection He passed through closed doors (John 20:19); for it is written that He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:21). And if such a great and grand change is awaiting the believer's body in the resurrection state, who can conceive the change *of the soul* when it is “glorified?” Who is so bold as to define the limits of the soul's capacities and capabilities when freed from the burden of sin and made like Christ (1 John 3:2)? Who can estimate the excellency of a glorified soul's operations in connection with Divine things?! - A.W.P.

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December, 1936

### **Unbelief.**

This sin may be called the white devil, for it oftentimes, in its mischievous doings in the soul, shows as if it were a little angel of light; yea, it acteth like a counselor of Heaven. Therefore, a little discourse of this evil disease.

First, it is that sin, above all others, that hath some show of *reason* in its attempts; for it keeps the soul from Jesus Christ by pretending its present unfitness and unpreparedness - as a lack of more sense of sin, want of more repentance, want of more humility, want of a more broken heart.

Second, it is the sin that most suiteth with *the conscience*. The conscience of the coming sinner tells him that he hath nothing good, that he stands indictable for ten thousand talents, that he is a very ignorant, and hard-hearted sinner, unworthy to be taken notice of by Jesus Christ; and “will you,” says unbelief, “in such a case as you now are, presume to come to Jesus Christ?”

Third, it is the sin that most suiteth with our sense of *feeling*. The coming sinner feels the workings of sin, of all manner of sin and wretchedness in his flesh; he also feels the wrath and judgment of God due to sin, and often times staggers under it. “Now,” says unbelief, “you may see you have no grace, for that which works in you is corruption. You may also perceive that God doth not love you, because the sense of His wrath abides upon you; therefore, how can you have the face to come to Jesus Christ?”

Fourth, it is that sin, above all others, that most suiteth the *wisdom of our flesh*. The wisdom of our flesh thinks it prudent to question awhile, to stand back awhile, to hearken to both sides awhile, and not to be rash, sudden, or unadvised in too bold or presuming upon Jesus Christ; and this wisdom unbelief falls in with.

Fifth, it is the sin, above all others, that is continually whispering the soul in the ear with *mistrusts* of the faithfulness of God in keeping His promise to them that come to Jesus Christ for life. It also suggests mistrusts about Christ's willingness to receive and save; and no sin can do this so artificially as unbelief.

Sixth, it is also that sin which is always at hand to *enter an objection* against this or that promise which by the Spirit of God is brought to our hearts to comfort us; and if the poor coming sinner is not aware of it; it will, by some exaction, slight, trick, or cavil, quickly wrest from him the promise again, and he shall but little benefit of it.

Seventh, it is that, above all other sins, that *weakens* our prayers, our faith, our love, our diligence, our hope, and expectations; it even taketh the heart away from God in duty.

Lastly, this sin, as I have said even now, appears in the soul with so many *sweet pretences* to safety and security, that it is, as it were, counsel sent from Heaven, bidding the soul be wise, wary, considerate, well-advised, and to take heed of too rash a venture upon believing. "Be sure first that God loves you; take hold of no promise until you are forced by God unto it; neither be you sure of your salvation; doubt it still, though the testimony of the Lord has been confirmed in you; live not by faith, but by sense; and when you can neither see nor feel, then fear and mistrust, doubt and question all." This is the counsel of unbelief, which is so covered over with specious pretences that the wisest Christian can hardly shake off these reasons. - John Bunyan, 1670.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1937

### **Union and Communion.**

#### *9. Glory.*

It was our desire to have closed last month's article with some reflections constituting a "practical application" of the subject, but lack of space hindered us; we shall therefore introduce them at this stage, and they and add a few more remarks about the future bliss of the righteous. Our desire is not only to enlighten the mind, but to affect the heart, so that our lives may be more fruitful to the praise of the glory of Divine grace. God has indeed been good in revealing so much concerning that everlasting bliss which awaits His people on High, yet the practical value of such knowledge to us is to be determined by *the effects* which it produces in our daily walk. Those who are going to behold the King in His beauty will surely strive after a closer conformity to His image in this life, and then, conscious of their deplorable lack of such conformity, will not only be filled with grief, but be kept humble in the dust before Him.

First, *a radical change of heart* is indispensable before any depraved member of Adam's fallen race can participate in the inheritance of the saints in light. Moreover, that change must take place before death, for at death each individual goes to "his *own place*" (Acts 1:25)—Heaven or Hell, for which either holiness or sin fits him. Nor does glorification (unlike regeneration) effect any radical change: instead, it is the *perfecting* of what has previously been wrought in a person. No one enters Heaven unless Heaven has first entered him. No one goes to be with Christ unless Christ has first dwelt in his heart. How could those who never had any spiritual love for Him find joy and satisfaction from spending an eternity in His immediate presence? If we have no relish for spiritual things in this life, if our hearts perceive not the supreme

“beauty of holiness,” then we would be completely out of our element in the dwellingplace of the Holy One, and where none but holy persons are found. Therefore “without holiness no man shall see the Lord.”

The natural man has a settled aversion from God. The unregenerate are “alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart” (Eph. 4:18), and therefore do they deliberately choose a life that is “*without God* in the world” (Eph. 2:12). True, many of them (like millions of the heathen) assume a religious garb at certain seasons and engage in a round of religious exercises, yet both in heart and practice they are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Press upon such the claims of Christ, tell them He requires the throne of their hearts, seek to set before them the blessedness of a life of obedience to Him and the sweetness of communion with Him, and they will regard you as a fanatic and killjoy. At how great a moral distance, then, are all such souls from heavenly blessedness: either it must be changed to match their corruptions, or their hearts must be changed to suit its purity.

Reader, has *your* heart been so changed that fellowship with Christ is your chiefest delight? O the deceitfulness of the human heart! O the powerful infatuation of self-love! O the fatal delusions of Satan, that so many yet “in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity” should suppose that God can be imposed upon by lip-service or by the labour of the hands. Alas, what multitudes imagine that a few drops of water sprinkled upon them during infancy secures an entrance into Heaven. What multitudes suppose that “joining a church” and financially supporting the minister is sufficient to ensure everlasting bliss. And what countless other thousands persuade themselves that a head knowledge and mouth profession of the Truth is all that is needed. Ah, my reader, thou canst not impose upon God, and never shall you enter *His* kingdom unless thou be born again. Then let each of us seriously and solemnly examine himself.

Second, the soul in which that great change is wrought *eagerly pursues Heaven's blessedness* until it be attained. Perfect conformity to Christ, unbroken communion with Him, is now its supreme desire and quest: let a soul be regenerated and nothing short of this can satisfy it. The deepest longing of a renewed heart is “LORD, lift Thou up the light of *Thy* countenance upon us” (Psa. 4:6). The giddy crave worldly pleasures, the miser his gold, the ambitious earthly honours, but Christian experience is summed up in, “One thing have I *desired* of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4). That which is to afford him *eternal* joy and satisfaction is the object of the believer's *present* desire and delight: a visit from Christ, a smile from Him, a sip of His love, is what he is constantly asking for.

“As for me, I will behold Thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15), which is the same as saying, I cannot be satisfied otherwise. But what does that word “satisfied” imply? Hunger is satisfied with food, thirst with water: that which was previously craved is now obtained, and *contentment* follows. Thus, satisfaction of soul necessarily implies a *previous longing* of soul after that which alone can satisfy, a working of earnest desire, a tireless seeking after that which continues to so largely elude us in this life. “With my soul have I *desired* Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early” (Isa. 26:9)—yes, “seek” after a conscious access to the Lord and a sight of His face, as earnestly, as diligently, as persistently, as the worldling does after carnal things. “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I *follow after*, if that I may apprehend (lay

hold of) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:12). That word “attained” has a very small place in the theology of some who are lop-sided on grace. Yet the Apostle hesitated not to use it, realising that his spiritual longings called for a “following after” on his part.

Here, then, is another point at which we need to test ourselves. It is a contradiction in terms to speak of a soul being “satisfied” in the future if it had no *previous yearning*. In this life there is a restless longing and working of soul: in the life to come the goal is reached and rest (satisfaction) is attained. Thus, if I be seriously minded, if I am concerned about the hereafter, how it behooves me to ascertain whether there be within me a supreme desire, a spiritual appetite, a soul craving which this poor world cannot satisfy, and which stirs me up to seek after Christ now. Or does the language of the Spouse in the Song of Solomon, wherein she expresses her joy and bliss at the brief visits of her Beloved, and her loss and anguish at His departure, strike you as wild enthusiasm? If so, be sure that your heart has not within it that principle which finds its fruition in Heaven. We may ascertain our state by the *objects of our desires*. Make no mistake: that can never be your eternal blessedness for which now you have no relish. Christ will not receive into His presence those to whom it would be a burden.

Third, the knowledge of God and conformity to His image are in their very nature *satisfying* to a renewed soul, and even now *actually do so* in the measure in which they are attained by us. Mere *things* cannot satisfy, for they perish with the using of them. He who hopes to find satisfaction by multiplying his carnal pleasures, or by heaping together material things, is on as vain a quest as if he sought to make a sum by adding together naught but cyphers. But that which shall one day fully satisfy, has in itself an aptness and power to satisfy even now. Happy the soul which has been let into the secret of where real satisfaction is to be found, and knows whither to turn his eyes and direct his efforts in the pursuit thereof. Thrice happy those who can say, Give me an experimental, living, efficacious sight of God, and I have enough: “show us the Father, and it *sufficeth us*” (John 14:8).

Let the weary wandering soul turn unto *God*: He will not mock thee with shadows as the world does. “This is life eternal, that they might know Thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent” (John 17:3). Apart from Christ we cannot know God nor view Him with comfort; but the Gospel gives a lovely prospect of Him: the glory of God shines “in the face of Jesus Christ” (2 Cor. 4:6), and the more faith beholds Him there, the more does the soul move toward satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). A vital knowledge of God tends to holiness, and holiness to contentment. Nothing is more analogous to Heaven than the peace and serenity which issues from the believer's present enjoyment of God. He does not wholly conceal Himself from the saints, but favours them with an occasional glimpse of His smiling face, and the degree in which He vouchsafes this blessing brings Heaven into the soul: “They looked unto Him, and were lightened” (Psa. 34:5).

Fourth, but inasmuch as the soul's complete blessedness lies in the future, then his happiness in the meantime must largely consist *in hope*. It is the Divine promise that one day there shall be nothing to mar his fellowship with Christ that now supports the saint. It is the assurance that ere long his hunger and thirst after righteousness shall be filled (Matt. 5:6), and that “no groans shall mingle with the songs that warble from immortal tongues,” which comforts the oft cast-down soul. “If we *hope* for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom. 8:25). Yes, it is the exercise of hope which encourages the weary

pilgrim to continue plodding on, which nerves the Christian soldier *not* to give up the good fight of faith. It was hope which moved the soul to first seek unto God for mercy, and hope will make its possessor *continue seeking* unto Him till every longing receives its fruition.

Here is yet another point by which to test ourselves. Are our expectations of satisfaction centered in present or future things? They who have received the “firstfruits of the Spirit” cannot but earnestly groan after the harvest itself: “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body” (Rom. 8:23). Have you, my reader, been the happy recipient of a bunch of the “grapes of Eschol”? If so, nothing that grows in this wilderness satisfies your palate, and your face will be eagerly turned to that fair Land of Promise of which that “bunch” was but the earnest. If you really have a “good hope through grace” (2 Thess. 2:16) then you will, in some measure at least, live upon things future and unseen. “They that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:5).

Fifth, if we honestly perceive any disposition of soul toward the holy glory of Heaven, any principle within which causes us to pant after God as the hunted hart does after the waterbrooks, then how diligently and zealously should we *seek after the strengthening* and developing of the same, and endeavour to bring our hearts into that temper suited thereto. If we are painfully conscious of how far short we fall of being conformed to the image of Christ, then we should stir up our souls to make more serious efforts after the same. If we are to spend an eternity in His presence, how we should strive after a growing knowledge of God, how we should seek to please and honour Him in all things. Then let us “follow on to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3), let us spend more time in the “secret place of the Most High,” let us make future things the subject of our meditation. (For much in the above paragraphs we are indebted to J. Howe).

Is it not worth some pains to attain unto the blessedness of Heaven? If athletes undergo such discipline and self-denial in order to obtain a corruptible crown, shall *we* murmur because the turning of our backs upon the world and the mortifying of the flesh are required of us if we are to attain unto an incorruptible crown? Christians are not called to lie upon flowery beds of ease, but to strive against sin, to pluck out right eyes and cut off right hands, to make the cultivation of personal holiness the great business of their present lives. Christ has left His people an example, that they should follow His steps, and His path is not a smooth one, nor did He please Himself. Christ had to “endure the Cross” before He was rewarded by the heavenly bliss into which He has entered (Phil. 2:8, 9), and unless we take up our cross (that is, live a life of self-sacrifice) Heaven will not be our portion and reward. “To him *that overcometh* will I grant to sit with Me in My throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with My Father in His throne” (Rev. 3:21): that is the plainly revealed condition of celestial blessedness.

Once more we say, Can any present sacrifice be too great in view of the future joy? Consider again what the blessedness of the righteous shall consist of: it will be a complete freedom from all that is evil, and the eternal enjoyment of all that is good. When the full number of God's elect have been openly called by the Spirit and vitally united to Shiloh, their living Head, then will take place the solemnization of the nuptials between the heavenly Bridegroom and His Bride. “The King's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold. She shall be brought unto the King in raiment of needlework” (Psa. 45:13, 14), which was a prophetic statement that receives its fulfillment on the resurrection morning. At that time all her spots and blemishes will be eternally obliterated, and she will shine forth immutably holy, consummately

righteous, inestimably pure; thus will she be a suitable Consort for her glorious Husband, being fully conformed to His image.

Then it is that Christ shall “present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:27). This is the ultimate end of our redemption by Christ, the perfecting of our sanctification in the life to come. As Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together (Matt. 1:18), so the Church is contracted to Christ now, but the marriage is hereafter (Rev. 19:7). He will then take us Home to live with Himself and abide always in His immediate presence. “Thou art all fair, My love; there is no spot in thee” (Song. 4:7) will be His greeting; “My Beloved is white and ruddy, the chiefest among ten thousand” (5:10) will be her response. This presentation of the Church to Himself is Christ's recompense for His sufferings: it is then that “He shall see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied” (Isa. 53:1).

It is to be duly noted that the Church's glory in Heaven is the fruit of Christ's death. It is not merited by us but was purchased by Him. “Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it (i.e., in a sacrificial death) that He might sanctify it...that He might present it to Himself a glorious church” (Eph. 5:25-27). So again, “That by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance” (Heb. 9:15). The following distinctions may help. The electing grace of the Father is the original cause of our glorification. The atonement of Christ is the meritorious cause. Quickening by the Spirit is the efficacious cause. Personal holiness is what *fits* us, for it is the condition without which we cannot obtain eternal bliss (Heb. 12:14).

In Heaven our communion with Christ will reach its highest perfection, without any possibility of cessation or interruption. Heavenly communion will be our participation with Christ in all the benefits which flow from our union with Him. The glorified Head of the Church will share with His members the high honours which God has conferred upon Him. “The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly” (Rom. 16:20): yes, the saints will yet be brought to participate with Christ in His complete triumph over Satan. “Know ye not that we shall judge angels?” (1 Cor. 6:3). Communion is *mutual enjoyment*, and Christ will not be satisfied till His blood-bought people be in the same condition as Himself: “That ye may eat and drink *at My table* in My kingdom” (Luke 22:30); yea, “To him that overcometh will I grant to *sit with Me* in My throne” (Rev. 3:21). Then it is that He shall say, “Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord” (Matt. 25:21)—an unalloyed and holy joy, a perfect and satisfying one.

The God-man is Lord of angels (Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:4), and since His saints are joint-heirs with Christ, they must *share with Him* in His dominion over the celestial hosts. This is a bold statement, yet it is fully warranted by the teaching of Holy Writ; nor let it appear absurd, though it be so wonderful: if the Son of God condescended to take human nature upon Him, is it incredible that He should raise it to the highest creature dignity? Mark carefully the discrimination of language in the following passage, “And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne and of the four beasts, and *in the midst of* the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain....And I beheld, and I heard the voice of many angels *round about* the throne and the beasts, and the elders” (Rev. 5:6, 11). The redeemed are *nearer* the Lamb and more intimately connected with Him than the others, for the angels are only in the outer circle.

Above all, we shall be eye-witnesses of the glory which belongs to Christ personally. “And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads” (Rev. 22:4). Christ's glory will be beheld by us then to an extent we cannot now conceive: every faculty of soul and body will be refined to the highest degree, suited to the heavenly state, which will immeasurably increase our enjoyment of the beatific vision. The better the sight, the lovelier the object appears; the healthier the appetite, the more delicious the food tastes; the more musical the ear, the pleasanter the melody. So, the holier the soul, the more joyous Heaven's joys and the more glorious its glories. If the queen of Sheba had cause to say of Solomon's glory, “Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom” (1 Kings 10:8), then those who shall sit in the immediate presence of the infinitely greater than Solomon will be superlatively happy.

In Heaven the Christian will have a constant and satisfying sight of the God-Man, who, as such, is the “Lord of Glory.” In Him the Incomprehensible Three will shine forth in the uttermost display of Their manifestative glory before all the angels and saints. It is *that* which is the blessedness of Heaven, and which each saint shall forever behold, filling them with conceptions of glory as they can never express. The wicked will see Christ in the Day of Judgment, but they will not have an intuitive and supernatural sight of Him. In blessed contrast, it is by a *spiritual* faculty and light that the saints will see Him: it is so now, as He is revealed in the glass of the Word. That spiritual faculty, elevated by the Holy Spirit, will so raise up the mind as to take in larger and larger views of Christ, swallowing up every thought in the contemplation and adoration of the same.

Our life in Heaven will consist in an ever-expanding vision of Christ's manifold glory, so that we shall be eternally admiring, rejoicing in it, having communion with Him over it, giving Him praise for it. The heart will be wholly absorbed in its apprehensions of all “the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” which are now “hid” in Christ (Col. 2:3). We shall be completely lost to everything *but Him!* There will be such an “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17) on our minds, poisoning them, as to preclude every wandering thought from Him. The heart will be eternally fixed on Christ as its centre. Thus there can be no possibility of sin ever again gaining entrance to our souls. Then will be completely realised that Divine promise, “They shall be *abundantly satisfied* with the fatness of Thy house; and Thou shalt make them drink of the river of Thy pleasures. For with Thee is the fountain of life: in Thy light shall we see light” (Psa. 36:8, 9). - A.W.P.

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January, 1937

### **A Morning Prayer.**

O Lord, it is declared in Your Word, that man is like a thing of nought, his time passeth away like a shadow. We have to set our seal to this truth. For the night is past with us, and the morning come, and it is wholly owing to Thy will we remain in existence in a time state. We are in a measure made sensible of this, as we are admitted to live one day after another. We are more and more made sensible we have no existence in ourselves: it is wholly in Thee we have life, being, and existence. O that Thou wouldest make us more sensible of it. O that Thou wouldest deeply affect our minds herewith. Lord, grant us such a view hereof, as may lead us to entreat Thee so to teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

We do again draw nigh unto Thee, O Lord our God, beseeching Thee to grant us audience with Thy Divine majesty. Help us to appear before Thee in the name and Person, righteousness and sacrifice, intercession and advocacy of Thine Anointed, the holy and immaculate Lamb. O Lord, we have nothing in ourselves but sin. We are all impurity, we can come before Thee no otherwise than we are. To us belong shame and confusion of face. We are in every, in the uttermost sense of the expression, lost, undone, sinful, guilty, and vile. It is that alone which sustains us, that it is declared in Thy Word concerning Thee, "That Thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness." It is the knowledge and belief of this which encourages us to come before Thee.

At Thy throne of grace, as the monuments of Thy sacred mercy, we desire to extol and praise Thy most

holy name, that it hath pleased Thee to spare us the night past. We praise Thee for admitting us to continue in a time state to the present moment. O give us a real sense of the blessing and benefit of Thy preserving care and providence. It hath pleased Thee to exercise the same toward us to the present moment. We would lift up our hearts unto Thee, O Lord, in praise and thanksgiving for the same. Lord God, we find ourselves just as sinful and helpless in our selves as ever. Blessed be Thy name, Thou art the Lord our God, and Thy compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great, O Lord, is thy faithfulness. We would pray for such a sense of it on each of our minds, as might draw forth all our spiritual faculties to bless and magnify Thy holy name.

Thou art a covenant-keeping and covenant-performing God. Thou art always mindful of Thy covenant. O look on us, before Thee, as those who are interested in Thy covenant. O look upon us as fit objects and subjects for Thy majesty to exercise the tender mercies of Thy covenant on. We most certainly are, in ourselves, in our cases and circumstances, just exactly such as need the grace, mercy, and compassion, life, and salvation which is contained in the declaration of grace, in the promises of pardon, made known by it. We therefore cry out before Thee, O Lord, our God. We entreat Thee to behold us in Christ Jesus. O view us in Him. Lord, shine forth on us. Give us a sense of Thy covenant mercy. Grant us an enjoyment of Thy covenant salvation. Bless us in Christ Jesus: warm our hearts: raise up our minds: fill us with the gifts, graces, and consolations of the Holy Spirit.

O let our souls be under the mighty, all-constraining, all-conquering influence of Thine everlasting love this day. We would pray Thee to keep us this day from sinning against Thee. Lord, we are in ourselves, and when left to ourselves, like water which runneth apace. O succour us. O defend us. O be Thou near unto us this day, and uphold us with the right hand of Thy righteousness. Blessed God and Father, do Thou most graciously compassionate us. Let us have an evidence of it, by Thy taking each of our cases under Thine own particular notice and regard. O that we may be under the influence of the Holy Spirit this day. Lord Jesus Christ, be with our spirits. Lord Jesus, do Thou guide us with Thine eye. O keep us near Thyself. Suffer no iniquity to have dominion over us; save us from ourselves.

Save us, O Lord, from our constitutional sins, tempers, and corruptions. O let them be kept under, and subdued by the omnipotent power of Thy grace. Let us experience the power of Thy life and death in our mortal flesh: to the intent that we may live no longer to the lust of the flesh, but to the will of God. We beseech Thee, O Holy Spirit, to bring our minds and hearts under the mighty power of all-conquering grace. O Lord, let not sin, nor Satan, prevail against us. We would pray Thee to bless us in our bodies and souls, and grant that every blessing we shall enjoy this day, may savour of Heaven, and be received as so many pledges of Thy good-will and regard unto us. We pray Thee to sanctify all our blessings, and us to the use of them, to Thy praise and glory. So we request Thou wouldest keep us entirely dependent on Thee for the continuance of them. We leave ourselves with Thee, Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, to whom be glory forever. Amen.—S.E. Pierce, 1820.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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February, 1937

**Union and Communion.**  
*Conclusion.*

We have now completed the gamut of our subject. Starting with the *Divine* union that exists between the three Persons in the Godhead, which issues in a perfect communion between Them, we endeavoured to show how that made possible the *Mediatorial* union, namely, by the second Person taking into conjunction with Himself the Man Christ Jesus. That is a profound mystery, yet it is food for faith so far as it is revealed in Holy Writ. Then we saw how that the Divine counsels respecting the Mediatorial union laid a foundation for the Church's oneness with Christ. Tracing out the connection between the Church and its Head we have seen that it originated in a *mystical* union before the foundation of the world, when the eternal love of the Triune God chose its members in Christ, and gave it a covenant standing and super-creation subsistence, so that we read of the "grace which *was given us* in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9). Thus from all eternity the Church stood in Christ as His mystical Body and Bride.

Now what has just been said above has reference to God's eternal *decree* concerning the same. Descending, then, to the actual *outworking* of that decree, we have seen that the Divine purpose was realised by two things: the Son uniting Himself to us, we being joined to Him by the Spirit. First; in order for the Son to enter this world as the Representative and Surety of His people, it was necessary for Him to become flesh, and by so doing a *federal* union was established, Christ thereby assuming and discharging all the legal obligations of His people: "both He that sanctifieth and they which are sanctified are *all of one*" (Heb. 2:11). This federal union laid the foundation for the sins of His people to be imputed to Christ,

and His righteousness to them. Second, the Holy Spirit effects the *vital* union, each of God's elect being livingly “joined to the Lord” so that they become “one spirit,” this being essential if they are to partake of the benefits which Christ purchased for them. The same Spirit which indwells Christ in His fullness, now takes up His abode within them.

It is at regeneration the Spirit accomplishes our vital union with Christ, making us living branches of the true Vine; and it is this which makes possible a *saving union* with Him. We are not “saved” until we personally “*believe on*” the Lord Jesus Christ; but as saving faith is a spiritual act, one who is spiritually dead cannot perform it. The Spirit supernaturally quickens the soul in order to capacitate it unto a saving faith in Christ. It is the Spirit's quickening of us into newness of life which lays the foundation for feeling our deep need of Christ and casting ourselves upon Him. Until a man be born again he cannot see either his desperate condition or where the remedy is to be found. God must begin “a good work in the soul” (Phil. 1:6) before he will have any heart for Christ. Until we are brought from death unto life the Gospel falls upon deaf ears. When the Saviour is embraced by faith all our sins are blotted out, and Christ is “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30).

At this stage a difficulty presents itself. A vital union with Christ has been effected by the Spirit's quickening operation and a saving union with Christ by our exercise of faith. But the favoured one is left in this world, and a sinful nature indwells him: how, then, is *communion* to be maintained between him and a holy Christ? For that, there must be a *practical* union, for “Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). That “agreement” is accomplished just so far as our wills are brought into subjection to Christ's, just so far as we yield to His Lordship or authority over us. “Take My yoke upon you” (Matt. 11:29) is His call to us, and a “yoke” is what *unites together* in a practical way. There can be no communion with Christ outside the path of obedience, and the obedience He requires is that which flows from love and gratitude.

Now there are two chief means Divinely appointed for the *maintenance* of our practical union with Christ, namely, His precepts and His promises. In the one we learn His will, in the other we see His heart: in the one are directions concerning our duty, in the other is comfort and cheer. Whatever be our circumstances, there are precepts to counsel us, and promises to sustain. Yet let it be pointed out that no matter how plainly our duties are set forth in the Scriptures, nor how well-suited the promises be to our varied cases in this world, and no matter how diligently we apply ourselves to the one or the other, they will yield us no relief from the incubus of the flesh until by faith we draw enabling grace from the “fullness” which is in Christ for us (John 1:16). “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the *faith* of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20): faith in His person, in His mediatorial office, in His compassion, in His power.

Having been brought into vital union with Christ our privilege is to continue in communion with Him; having “come unto” Him, our duty is now to “abide in” Him. Yes, says the reader, that would be very simple if I no longer had any indwelling corruptions to plague me; but alas, it is but hypocrisy for *me* to talk about enjoying present communion with a holy Christ. Be careful, dear friend, lest you be found arraigning the wisdom and goodness of God. Has not *He* left the “flesh” within you?—had He deemed it most for His glory and your good, He would certainly have eradicated it. Has He made no provision for

His failing people to have fellowship with His blessed Son while they groan because of their sinful nature and its ceaseless activities? Weigh well that question, and go slow in saying that present communion with the eternal Lover of your soul is not for you.

The above difficulty finds its solution in *experimental* union with Christ. This we entered into at considerable length, because it is at this point that Christians experience so much difficulty. It is hard for them to realise that “there is a Friend which sticketh closer than a brother,” whose love for us never wavers, and whose ear is ever open to our most distressful cry. But experimental communion with Christ must be “in the light” (1 John 1:5-7): there must be perfect openness and reality in all our approaches to and dealings with Christ. If we come to Him as impoverished beggars, He will not turn us away; if we come as conscious and confessed lepers, He will not scorn us; but if we give way to a Laodicean spirit and pretend to be what we are not, He will ignore us.

Experimental communion with Christ consists in basking in the sunshine of His conscious presence: sitting at His feet and receiving from Him as Mary did (Luke 10:39), leaning upon His bosom as John did (John 13:23)—and *they* were of “like passions” as we! The more we are engaged in contemplating and resting in Christ's wondrous and unchanging love, the more will our poor hearts be warmed and our affections drawn out unto Him. Yes, but when I have neglected this privilege, and my heart has grown cold, and I have wandered far from Him, then what am I to do? Do exactly as you did at first: come to Him as the “Friend of publicans and sinners” (Matt. 11:19), cast yourself anew upon His mercy, acknowledge to Him your vileness, ask Him to wash away the filth of your iniquities, plead before Him the promises found in Jeremiah 3:12 and Hosea 14:4, and count upon His faithfulness to do as He has said. Remember that the precious blood of the Lamb is the only sufficient antidote for a wounded conscience: it is by new acts of faith in that blood we experience afresh its virtue.

The cessation of our strivings against sin, the toleration of temptations to sin, allowed indulgence in any sin, snaps this sensitive experimental communion. The loss of our fellowship with Christ is to the believer's soul what the extinction of sight or the absence of light would be to the body. The body might in such a case continue to discharge some of its functions, yet nothing could compensate for the loss of vision. So the soul, deprived of conscious communion with Christ, may, in a measure, perform some spiritual functions but it will go mourning after its lost treasure. The joy of the Lord is the believer's strength (Neh. 8:16), and his joy is commensurate with his fellowship with Christ (1 John 3:4). If, then, fellowship with Him be broken, the joy of salvation is lost (Psa. 51:12) as poor David discovered; nor can that joy be regained, till things are put right with the Lord, as the Psalmist also proved.

The only thing which closes our way against renewed communion with Christ is unrepented and unconfessed sins: they are to be *renounced* by godly sorrow, by contrite acknowledgment, by a return to the path of obedience. “They looked unto Him, and were lightened” (Psa. 34:5): “looked” in faith, and were “lightened” by the removal of their load of conscious guilt. Yet let it be pointed out that there must be real diligence and earnestness of soul when seeking restoration of experimental fellowship, for no slothful and formal effort will suffice. “By night on my bed I sought Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him, but I found Him not” (Song. 3:1): then is the soul to give way to despair? No, “I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek Him whom my soul loveth: I sought Him,

but I found Him not” (v. 2): ah, the Lord *tests* us! “The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye Him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little while that I passed from them, but I *found Him* whom my soul loveth: I beheld Him, and would not let Him go” (Song. 3:3, 4)—that was perseverance rewarded. “O LORD God of my salvation, I have cried day and night before Thee: let my prayer come before Thee, incline Thine ear unto my cry” (Psa. 88:1, 2): yes “day and night” *there* was intensity and importunity!

Finally, remember that the Lord Jesus is the great Physician, Divinely qualified for every wound, malady, want, which sin has wrought in us. Who needs Christ more than *yourself*, when you feel such a vile wretch? Who is there that Christ can get more glory from than by bearing with and cleansing such a one as *you*! The Holy Spirit makes the saint feel sin continually, that he may go continually to the Saviour. The wound is opened afresh to your view, that you may remember afresh it is by *His* “stripes” you are healed. It is the special office-work of the Spirit to continually convict us of sin, and make us inwardly acquainted with it, to the intent that we make more and more *use* of Christ, who is the alone remedy for every part of our spiritual disease.

Many suppose they cannot grow in grace and thrive spiritually unless they are full of comfort, peace and joy. But that is a great mistake. Growth in grace is a growing *in humility*, and thriving spiritually is to decrease in self-love and self-complacency. It is the great work of the blessed Spirit to humble our proud hearts, and this He does by showing us more and more of our nothingness, our utter unworthiness, our rottenness, and this in order to pave the way for exalting Christ, by showing how perfectly suited He is for our every case—for He has mercy on the *leper* who *comes to Him*! The Spirit makes us acquainted with our unutterable depravity and misery, that He may show us Christ's love and mercy. He brings to light our foulness, that He may proclaim the everlasting virtue of Christ's blood. He shows us our emptiness, to make us long after Christ's fullness.

Let it be duly borne in mind that *now* is the season of the Church's *humiliation*, and that those of its members still upon earth have not yet entered into their glorified state. It is very striking to observe that in this too the Church is conformed to the experiences of her Head. “The path of the Just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:18), which is true alike of both the Redeemer and the redeemed. By the sovereign grace of God, His elect have been brought into the place of unchanging blessing, yet the manifestation of this and their actual enjoyment of it, is experienced *gradually*, little by little. Then let not the tried and troubled Christian be unduly discouraged because, at present, his waterpot contains only water, and that oftentimes a filthy scum rises to the surface of it. It shall not ever be thus.

Christ is our *Pattern* in all things, as well as the Forerunner. The servant is not above his Master, but must follow His steps. Now a careful study of Christ's history reveals four distinct stages concerning His glory. First, there *was His primo-primitive glory* as the God-man, in the predestinating purpose of God. Not only did God behold in the glass of His decrees the Man taken into union by His Son, so that He could say, “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon Him” (Isa. 42:1) this was in eternity past; “He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles” was to occur in the time state; but Christ, as God-man, had a covenant subsistence and was endowed with a glory which

far excelled that of the angels. It was to *that* Christ had reference when He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self *with the glory* which I had with Thee before the world was” (John 17:5).

That “glory” was His mediatorial glory, for He never relinquished His essential glory as the second Person of the Trinity: He could not do so without ceasing to be God. Thus, the first and original state of Christ was one of celestial glory. So it was with the Church, for the correspondence is perfect at every point, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3): that too was “before the world began,” for the next verse goes on to state, “according as He hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him”! And again we read, “Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2 Tim. 1:9).

Second, there was *His humiliation state*, when He who was rich for our sakes became poor. The Lord of angels took upon Him the form of a servant. His glory was so veiled, the degradation into which He descended was so deep, that when here He “had not where to lay His head.” The state into which He had entered was such that He became “The man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.” So it is with His Church collectively, and with its members individually. It is “through much tribulation” that we “enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Sorrow and grief are our present portion: answerable, in our measure, to that through which the Head passed.

Third, there is *His state of exaltation*. This He entered into upon His ascension, when He was “received up into glory” (1 Tim. 3:16). He has been crowned “with honour and glory” and set “over the creation of God” (Heb. 2:7). Yet, as that passage goes on to say, “But now we see not yet all things put under Him.” No, at present He is “From henceforth expecting *till* His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb. 10:13). Moreover, Christ still lacks the completed and glorified Church, which is His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23). Agreeably to this, when we leave this world, we go to be with Christ which is “far better”; nevertheless, we still lack our glorified bodies—the perfect state is yet future.

Fourth, there is *the ultimate and eternal glory of Christ*, but He will not enter into *that* apart from His Church. The final glorification of both shall occur at the same time. God considers nothing too good or too much for the Bride of His Son, and He will yet endow and enrich her with every spiritual blessing, not only in order to fit her as a suitable Spouse, but elevating her to a state of holiness and happiness, honour and glory, beyond all human and angelic thought, so as to satisfy His own heart as well, and display to all eternity the exceeding riches of His wisdom and grace, and the height and depth, breadth and length of His love toward her. Then shall the glorified Head be glorified in His Body and admired by all them that believe. Then will be fully manifested the original super-creation glory of God's elect.

The future glory of the righteous in Heaven is of such a character that they will be so united unto God Himself, through Christ the God-man as the Medium of it, as for Him to make such a communication of blessedness through our Head, that in the issue of it we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God” (Eph. 3:19). It scarcely needs pointing out that those prayers of the Apostle which are recorded in Scripture were

indicted by the Holy Spirit, and therefore their several petitions are to be regarded by us as so many Divine promises, which, though realised by us in some measure now, will receive their perfect fulfillment in the future. Thus it will be with this most remarkable expression: in the Eternal State the elect shall be granted such communion with the Blessed Three that they will be filled with the life, the light, the love of God.

It is through Christ, yet it is *by the Spirit*, that we have all our knowledge of God. “The Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God” (1 Cor. 2:10, 11). The Spirit dwells in the hearts of believers now on earth, and He will dwell in them in Heaven to all eternity. Therefore is He denominated “The Spirit *of glory*” (1 Peter 4:14), for that title *looks forward* to His special relation to us in the unending future. Each Person in the Godhead will therefore have a distinctive part and place in connection with the everlasting bliss of the Church. We shall behold the Father's face (i.e., His revealed perfections), and Christ will be the Medium through which He shines, yet it is by the Spirit we shall be “filled with all the fullness of God.” That will be the climax of grace, the consummation of our salvation, and the very zenith of joyous privilege and bliss.

How incapable we are of forming any adequate conception of what it will mean for a soul to be “filled with all the fullness of God!” Not that the finite will ever contain or encompass the Infinite, yet the holy and glorious One shall completely possess and abundantly satisfy our entire beings, spirit and soul and body. The renowned Puritan, Thomas Goodwin illustrated this by the following simile: “So fill you, as the fire of a hot furnace doth a small piece of iron cast into it, when not dissolving it, or converting it into fire itself, yet you see not nor discern the iron, but it appears to be all fire. So the ever-blessed Three will be *all in all* to saints in Heaven, as to fill, penetrate, and so thoroughly possess their understandings, as for them not to mind or think of themselves or of the glory they are possessed of, through their being swallowed up in the thoughts and enjoyment of the glory of the co-equal Three shining on and in and through them.

Christ will everlastingly delight in the Church, and the Church will everlastingly delight in Him. There will be mutual intercourse, an unrestrained opening of heart one to another. In communion *communications* are made by *both* parties. One party bestows favour upon another, and the recipient reciprocates by giving back to the donor, according to the benefit received, grateful acknowledgment: those communications, from both sides, flowing from love and union. Thus we read, “Now ye Philippians know that....no church *communicated* with me as concerning giving *and* receiving, but ye only” (4:15). Paul and the Philippian saints were united in heart and had spiritual fellowship together in the Gospel (1:5). Out of love to him, they communicated in a temporal way, they being the active givers, he the passive receiver. Then, in return for their kindness, the Apostle communicated by acknowledging their beneficence, thanking them for it. This may help us a little to form some idea of what our communion with Christ in Heaven will be like. As the vine conveys sap to the branch, so the branch *responds* by bearing leaves and fruit. Christ will continue to be *the Giver*, and we be the receivers, yet this will issue in the overflowing of our love, and *in return* we shall pour out praise and thanksgiving, adoration and worship.

“He and I in one bright glory  
Endless bliss shall share:  
Mine, to be forever with Him;

His, that I am there.”

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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February, 1937

### **An Evening Prayer.**

We come again into Thine immediate presence, and present our persons, our souls and bodies, before Thy Divine Majesty, to record Thy name, and celebrate Thy praise for all the blessings Thou hast bestowed on us the past day. Thou hast fed us. Thou hast been with us. Thou hast been our helper and defence. O Thou Most High God, we praise Thee, we worship Thee, we glorify Thee. Help us to pour out our souls before Thee in an acceptable manner. O Lord, it is with Thee to hear the desire of the humble, it is Thou who preparest the heart, it is Thou who inclinest Thine ear to hear. Surely O God, it is great condescension in Thee to look on such as we are. If one of Thine said before Thee, I am but dust and ashes, what, O Lord, can we say concerning ourselves. O that we had the same low and mean views of ourselves as is expressed in such an acknowledgement.

If another of Thine cried out, "Behold, I am vile," how shall we order our speech before Thee by reason of our darkness? If a prophet, when favoured with a visionary sight of the ever-blessed God-man, cried out "Woe is me, for mine eyes have seen the King, Lord of hosts!" What shall we say, or how shall we open our mouths? Blessed be Thy name, Thou delightest in mercy. We come as sinners into Thy presence. We present ourselves before Thy Majesty, to magnify Thy name, because Thy mercy endureth forever. O for Thy presence with our souls at this time. O for a real sense of Thy goodness on our minds. Lord, help us to pour out our hearts before Thee. We are full of sin; O lead us to the fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. We are in ourselves all unrighteousness. O direct our minds to Jesus as the Lord our righteousness, and help us to receive Him afresh into our minds as such. We are all emptiness in ourselves.

Lord, lead us to the fullness of Jesus for the supply of all our wants.

Thou hast bestowed innumerable mercies upon us throughout the past day. Lord, help us with gratitude and praise to glorify Thee for the same. Thou hast said, he that offereth praise glorifieth Thee. Help us so to do. It being what is our duty, and most reasonable service. We might each of us, under proper views of the personal mercies we have this single past day received and enjoyed from Thee, confess it wholly out of our power to praise Thee for these mercies. We thank Thee, O lord, that Thy name endureth forever, and Thy memorial throughout all generations. We pray, O Lord Jesus Christ, Thou wouldest look down most graciously on us. Lord, visit us. O Lord, refresh us. O Lord, revive us. O Lord, be Thou unto us as dew unto Israel, let us revive as the corn: let us grow as the vine: let us cast forth our roots as Lebanon; let us grow as the lily. It is with Thee, O blessed Jesus, to fulfill Thy holy promise unto Thy saints.

Thou art pleased to suit Thy Word to all the cases of Thy beloved ones. Thou art pleased to view and review all their wants and circumstances, and Thine eye and Thine heart is upon them perpetually. Blessed be Thy name, Thou art ever mindful of thy covenant. Thou hast Thy people in continual remembrance. Lord, we beseech Thee, to make one with us at this time. Lord, be Thou pleased to bring home to our minds, and fulfil in us, Thy holy will and Word concerning us. Let us give up ourselves unto Thee, to be cast into the very mold of Thy Gospel. Let us renounce all which is ours by nature. Let us know ourselves for what we are in ourselves, for what we see, feel, and experience in ourselves. Do Thou, O blessed Jesus, realise in each of our minds afresh the virtue and efficacy of Thy sacrifice and most precious blood. Let us fully believe the record given concerning it. Let us rest on the everlasting perfection of Thy one offering.

Do Thou shed Thy Holy Spirit in His Divine influences on us. O let us rejoice in Thee. Lord, be with us the remainder of this night. Lord, lay under us, Thine everlasting arms. O let us be found in Thee without spot and blameless. We beseech Thee, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the eternal Three in the self-existing and incomprehensible God-head, to be with us this night, to bless us this night, to defend us from all evil, and to bring us to behold and enter on the coming day in health and peace; and Thine shall be all the praise, Amen.—S.E. Pierce, 1820.

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**“By Me Kings Reign”**

(*Prov.* 8:15).

How blessed to be assured of this! It is not political influence, the will of the people, nor the personal caprice of royalty (whether they shall reign or abdicate), which is the determining factor. No, the King of kings is the One who fills and empties the thrones of earth, and none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest Thou? (*Dan.* 4:35). It is true that He uses means and employs instruments in the executing of His will, yet they are but clay in the hands of the Divine Potter. We press this point because our lot is cast in a day when men's thoughts are so engaged with secondary causes, and their eyes so fixed on mediatory influences, that He who directs all causes and regulates all influences is largely lost sight of.

To submit to God's sovereign dispensation and “honour the king” (*1 Peter* 2:17) because of his office, irrespective of his character, is our bounden duty at all times—a Nero was the emperor of Rome when that precept was first set down in writing! Nevertheless, it cannot but gladden the hearts of the righteous when the Lord is pleased to give a monarch who *honours Him*, outwardly at least, and sets before his subjects an example of regal piety. For the greater part of last century, and for most of the present one, Great Britain has been blest with first a queen, and then a king, who reverently bowed the knee before the Most High. And now God has again exalted to the throne a king and his royal consort who are not ashamed to *own Him* both in their public and private lives. This is a mercy for which we cannot be sufficiently grateful.

I believe that we voice the sentiments of all God's people in the British empire when we say there is cause for rejoicing in the people and happy issue which the Lord has granted to the recent sad crisis. There is occasion for praise that at the critical juncture we were favoured with a prime minister and cabinet who refused to compromise with evil—having in this the unanimous support of the Colonies—and who faithfully performed their duty, however painful. Though not an Anglican, the editor for one is profoundly thankful that the “Church of England” (despite its faults and failings) is still, under God, a real bulwark to the British throne, long may she continue such, if God be so pleased. It is good to know that our new king and queen have their own private family worship each day. May the Lord be very merciful, and grant them all needed grace to live before their people as becometh those who profess the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.—A.W.P.

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March, 1937

### **Preserving Grace.**

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed

Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mark 5:1-20).

That the man, above recorded, was not only a *demoniac*, or man possessed with demons, but also a *maniac*, or *mad-man*, is evident from the text of verse 15, in which it is said, the people saw him “sitting, and clothed, and in his *right mind*.” And it is very evident that the expression “in his right mind” can have no reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in him as a sanctified soul, although it may be so spiritualized; for of this secret and Divine work, the common people or unconverted Gadarenes could be no judges, nor could it be cognizable to their senses; but the plain and obvious meaning of the text is this: that the man was restored to the use of his natural faculties, that his mind was both sound and intelligent.

In the passage above cited, the Church of Christ is presented with one of the most remarkable cases in the Book of God, of the preservation of a soul under great tribulation, from the act of *self-destruction*; of the miraculous deliverance of a child of God, under derangement of mind, from the dreadful crime of SUICIDE. In this affecting narrative, the Christian world is presented with an extraordinary display of the preservation of one of God's elect (a lunatic) from the commission of suicide, though continually incited to the same, by a host or legion of devils!—of a man in whom the words of the Apostle were most truly exemplified, “preserved in Christ Jesus, and (*then*) called” (Jude 1). And, my brethren, if the soul of the “elect” be thus wondrously preserved in Christ Jesus *before* calling, or before the spiritual and saving manifestation of Christ to the soul, how much rather when that soul is sensibly and savingly sanctified by the *Presence* and *Indwelling* of God? “Know ye not (says the Apostle to the Church at Corinth) that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”

Think for a moment, my Christian friends, of the deplorable state and condition of this poor Maniac, and yet (O amazing truth) a vessel of God's boundless and eternal mercy. Behold a man, whom no man could tame; fierce and ramping as a lion; a man isolated from his fellow-men—mad, forsaken, desolate; a miserable and terrific outcast; a man, literally *full of Devils*! Look to his habitation, among the corpses of the dead; and mark, this was not an occasional retreat, but his very *dwelling*-place; “who had his dwelling among the tombs.” Look too at the state of his body: naked, bleeding, and wounded: to the state of his mind—“crying continually”; driven about with a tempest, sometimes furiously rushing upon the mountains; at others, prowling and weeping among the tombs

Poor man! And hadst thou no friend to pity thee, none to speak peace to thy bleeding soul? Alas, who dared approach? for he was full of devils (it is worth to note that no sooner were these spirits permitted to enter the swine, than they led them to instant destruction!) spirits of the damned bent on *destruction*, and were urging their victim continually to the commission of SUICIDE, “by cutting himself with stones.”

Poor man! And hadst thou no eye to pity thee? Blessed be God! The eternal Jehovah was thy refuge; His everlasting arms were underneath; and therefore the gates of Hell *could not* prevail. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14). O the safety of the soul that is

wrapped up in the “bundle of life,” and embosomed in the heart of God! Many waters cannot quench the flame of heavenly love, nor can the floods of Hell extinguish it. Such an one may be persecuted of devils, but he *shall not* be forsaken; cast down of Hell, but *not* destroyed. Sooner or later the sweet music of this precious promise shall ring in his ears, and bring peace and consolation to his afflicted soul: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41:10).

O, my Christian brethren, could *we* have stood upon an eminence and beheld the ravings of this poor Maniac, how affecting had been the sight, how afflictive the contemplation! Now prowling like a wolf among the dwellings of the dead; then, furiously rushing up and down the mountains, crying, weeping, bleeding. Why does he not plunge from off the mountain's brow and end his wild career? The arm of Omnipotence restrains him. Why not bleed to death of his wounds? An unseen hand binds them up. But how can mortality sustain such a conflict? The arms of God are underneath; and “Mercy (*in Christ*) embraceth him on every side.” Nature exhausted, he sinks upon the ground and falls insensibly to sleep. The rains drench his skin, the winds blow, (he hears them not), the tempest rages, and now the rays of the sun dart upon his defenseless head; and yet, he still survives!—a spark of heavenly, *unextinguishable* flame, tossed upon the rude ocean of turbulent and tormenting devils.

Poor and afflicted Child of Mercy! And wherefore thus grievously afflicted and tormented? That in the inscrutable decrees of Jehovah, he might become a Barnabas, a son of CONSOLATION! A pastor after God's own heart, a feeder of the flock of Christ: “And he departed, and began to *publish* in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and *all men did marvel*” (Mark 5:20). A Preacher, not like many of the day who thrust themselves into the Ministry, the leprosy of whose presumption is stamped of God upon their foreheads, but a Minister of the Sanctuary, chosen of the Father, ordained of the Spirit, and sent forth of the Son, to testify of the remorseless tyranny of Satan, the helplessness and wretchedness of man, and the abundant and exceeding riches of the sovereign grace of God—a man of deep and heartfelt experience; a guide to the blind, and a champion for the truth; a preacher inspired of the Spirit, entrusted and empowered of God. But, poor afflicted Child of Mercy! wherefore wast thou thus grievously tried and tormented? That the power, grace, and glory of God may be transcendently manifest: that in the ages to come, the Church might behold (in this poor Maniac) a bright and living Epistle of the preservation of ALL God's blood-bought Family FROM THE APPALLING CRIME OF SUICIDE.

O, my Brethren, how full of sweet and heavenly consolation is the deliverance of this Demoniac to all the distressed and persecuted people of God! Behold a man without human control, without the restraint of human reason, and carried away by Devils as a flood, and yet PRESERVED FROM SUICIDE. Can a stronger case be possibly conceived, or can its parallel be found? Poor and afflicted child of God! hast thou a Legion of Devils in thy soul? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou driven as with a tempest night and day; no house, no home? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou deprived of reason, and is thy body naked, bleeding wounded? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide; for the Spirit of the Lord shall go forth with healing in His wings, and shall pluck thee out of many waters: He shall bear thee as an olive branch through the windows of Heaven, and place thee, as the trophy of Mercy, in the bosom of thy God. “And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away” (Isa. 35:10).

Tossed as a wreck, (with helm of reason lost) little did this Maniac dream of the mercies that awaited him on high: but no sooner has the appointed moment of deliverance arrived, than the Sun of righteousness dispels the gloom: and in His glorious beams the holy Dove descends, broods over her adopted child, and plucks Her darling from the lions. “Sing O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel” (Isa. 44:23). Poor afflicted child of God! dost thou sometimes fear the violence of temptation will lead thee to the commission of Suicide? Behold a man in whom a legion of Devils appeared to have full sway, a fierce and ramping Maniac; in a word, a man who *seemed* forsaken of God, and given up to Hell, and yet *preserved from Suicide*. Hitherto thou shalt come, Satan, but no further, and *here* (TOUCH NOT HIS LIFE) shall thy proud waves be stayed.

Let us now turn to Job, that eminent example of suffering patience and affliction. Now, my friends, in looking over the sacred records of this good man, we find him pouring out his complaint in this impassioned strain: “My soul chooseth *strangling and death* rather than *life*” (Job 7: 15). But did Job's great afflictions lead him to the *commission of Suicide*? On the contrary, his language is most triumphant: “When He hath tried me (says Job) *I shall come forth as gold.*” As gold glittering from the furnace, shining and sparkling for the Master's use, a vessel of honour for the temple of my God.

Now Job's trials were not ordinary, but altogether extraordinary; for he was greatly exercised both in his property, his family, his mind, and his faith; and yet, so far was he from committing suicide, that he even triumphs in the furnace and glories in the flame. “And He (the Lord) shall purify the sons of Levi (the elect of God) and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.”

My Christian friends, did Job *long* for death, *plead* for death, *pray* for death, *seek* for death more than a man seeks for hidden treasure? then why not rush into Suicide? The arms of omnipotent Jehovah were thrown around him; (“I am thy Shield”) and when Satan came in *as a flood*, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him. “Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel (the Church of God); I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.”

To the point in question: how consolatory to the Church is Jehovah's charge to Satan when delivering up Job to be sifted as wheat: “Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life!” *Touch not his life!* As though the Lord had said, Satan, this is a prerogative I will yield to none, and will *never* yield to thee. This is a prerogative I will maintain inviolate with *all* my blood-bought children, lest, through the power of temptation, they fall into Suicide. And what said our Lord to Peter when under similar circumstances? “I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.” Now the language of our Lord to Peter is the language of Christ to His Church in all ages of the world; and if the faith of the Church fail not, how can they fall into Suicide.

But again, the Lord hath promised that “*He will keep* the feet of His saints.” Now the promise is both absolute and universal, and will therefore apply itself to the saint under *all* states and circumstances; but how can the Lord keep the feet of His saint, if He suffer them, desperately, to rush into Suicide? Is not God faithfulness and truth? Hath He promised, and shall He not perform? Did He keep the feet of Job, and this poor Maniac? So, poor, tried, and tempted soul, will He also keep *thee*, for the Lord is not a man that

He should lie, nor the Son of Man that He should repent. “My covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.”

Again, Paul testifies in the Spirit, “God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make *a way to escape*”; but if through the power of temptation I fall into Suicide, I am *not* escaped, but *ensnared*. “Let God be true, and every man a liar.” Again, the Lord hath promised His Church, that “when the enemy (Satan) shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Now this standard is God Himself. Shall God oppose Satan *in vain*? Again, it is said, “Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life”: but do I *endure* temptation if I become a Suicide? Now the children of God are the “blessed of God”; and the promise is of grace that it might “*be sure to all the seed*.” It follows, therefore, that the saints will endure temptation, and *not fall* into Suicide.

Again, the Apostle propounds this question to the Church; “Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?” and then replies, “In ALL these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”: but do I TRIUMPH in tribulation, if tribulation drive me to Suicide? And lastly, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work repentance (the dying thief repented, and made a confession to the glory of God!) *for sin* in the souls of ALL His saints. But how can there be repentance of that sin which carries me as a criminal before the Judge, and presents me reeking with the blood of life? Is there repentance in the grave? The Word says, No. Where then stands my *unrepentant* soul? Thus the crime of Suicide carries the offender beyond the pale of mercy (it carries him before God in the *very commission of his sin*), seals his awful doom, and apports him eternally with all the sons of perdition. Like Judas and Ahithophel, that man perishes in his iniquity.

Now the Spirit testifies, that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” My Christian Brethren, have you a *single case* in the Divine Record of a saint's falling into Suicide? I say, Have you a single case in *the whole Bible* of a saint's having fallen into the commission of that dreadful sin? You have none. You may search from Genesis to Revelation, but you will find none. Now, if the thing were possible, we ought to have an example, seeing the Word of God is given for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be “thoroughly furnished,” but behold, we have NOT ONE! What, then, is the common inference or conclusion to be drawn from this memorable fact? The conclusion, I apprehend, will be thus: **THAT THE CHILD OF GOD, OR SPIRITUAL BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS NEVER PERMITTED TO FALL INTO SUICIDE.**

But some say, Did not Samson commit Suicide? By no means. He died as a martyr, fighting in the cause of God. He fell contending with the world, and went triumphantly to glory. O there is a mighty difference in dying to the confusion of God's enemies, and falling as a Suicide to the confusion of friends! When Samson contended with a thousand of his foes, his life was prolonged; but in this, his last conflict, he fought, fell, and conquered as in a moment. Grasping the pillars upon which the house stood, Samson cried unto his God; and having received power from on high (the sanction of the HOLY ONE!) he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost. Like his blessed Lord and Master (of whom he was a glorious type) he

overcame most in his death. Samson died a blessed martyr in the cause of God; he fell *not* into Suicide. Did Stephen shrink to declare the truth in the very teeth of his enemies? so neither did Samson shrink from the pillars of the house, though like Stephen, he were to be stoned to death. Thus fell these champions of the faith, scorning bodily deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. “He that hateth his life in this world,” said our blessed Lord to His disciples, “shall keep it unto life eternal.”

But it will be asked, Have not the saints of God ever *attempted* Suicide? Most certainly they have; both *before* and *after* calling. Like the poor Demoniac recorded by Matthew (17:15) they have oftentimes sought their own destruction; but, through Mercy, have, as oftentimes, been *wonderfully delivered*. “Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the works of God.” “Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace.” “Destitute, afflicted, tormented.” One of the dear children of God determines upon self-destruction: carried as by a flood, she steals along the river's brink, selects the fatal spot, and is just about to plunge into the stream, when suddenly the voice of God is heard; in an instant, Satan's fled, the soul set free, and Christ has resumed His throne. O Satan, “thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but *the Lord helped me!*” “The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my Nation.” Another child of God draws the knife, but the weapon fails. Another grasps the cup of poison, but his hand so trembles that he cannot hold it to his lips. Another takes a halter and looks for a beam, but is prevented he knows not how. Another suspends his body from a door, but soon the fastening fails, and he drops to the floor. Carnal professors, whose hearts have been “swept and garnished” by themselves, never dream of such temptations as these, and are ready to reproach and accuse the children of God when thus exercised; but let such professors remember God hath not spoken in vain, “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Carried by this flood, David fell into adultery and murder; and poor boasting Peter cursed and swore, and declared he knew not his Lord and Master. Merciful God! What ways and means hast Thou devised to prove the unchangeableness of Thy sovereign mercy, the *immutability* of Thy Covenant love! “My Covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.”

But, it may be asked, are there not instances of men celebrated for knowledge of Divine mysteries, and of most exemplary conduct, falling into the crime of Suicide? The fact is notorious, and cannot be denied: but that we may reply to the question effectually, let us turn to the Word of Truth, the unerring testimony of God. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, (Christ *dwelling in my soul*) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” In other words, though I be ever so *gifted*, and have not *grace*, I am nothing. As a preacher I may be greatly attractive to my hearers; as “one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument”; but if Christ be not formed in my soul “the hope of glory” I am nothing. Even David, that eminent man of God, was deceived in this matter. He took a man of gifts, for a man of grace; but as he advanced in the Divine life, God showed him greater things. He went to the house of God with Ahithophel and took sweet counsel together, and thought him a dear brother in the Lord; but in time of temptation this high-sounding professor (this cymbal of the Sanctuary) fell away. He sided with Absalom in the rebellion, pleaded against the sweet singer of Israel, and sought to compass the death of the king, by the very son of his bowels! I say, therefore, though men be gifted to speak as with the tongues of men and of angels, and draw the eyes of the Church upon them as the beloved of God, if they be not **TEMPLES OF THE HOLY GHOST** (truly “born of God”), in time of temptation they fall away.

Of the *sanctified* Professor, the Lord hath declared, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper”; but of unsanctified professors, however eloquent and commanding their gifts and attainments, “in time of temptation they fall away.” And hence the propriety of the apostolic injunction; “Let him who *thinketh* he standeth, take heed lest he fall”: and again, “If a man think himself to be something (a Christian) when he is nothing (not so), he deceiveth himself.” As, therefore, in the apostolic days, so in the present, men may be found so highly gifted that for a season they deceive the very elect: “But they went out from us,” says the Apostle, “because THEY WERE NOT OF US.” The question, therefore, may be thus scripturally solved: such men have received *gifts*, but they have *not* received God—the GIVER: now, what are the gifts of the Bridegroom, to the Bridegroom himself?

Let no man, therefore, and especially a teacher in Israel, presume to judge his brethren in this matter; nor consider the flock contumacious, because they cannot, dare not receive unauthorized, the unscriptural affirmation, that men of grace may, *unwittingly* play the part of Judas, and fall into the crime of Suicide. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is *no light* in them.”

Let the ministers of Christ remember they are not to set themselves up as judges of doctrine for the Church, but the Church are to judge the doctrine of their minister; and if it be of God, to receive it; and if not, to condemn it. “Let the prophets speak,” says Paul, “and let the other (the Church) judge.” Nay, farther, If the Church have authority to try the doctrine of the Apostles, how much more, ministers of the present day? “But though we,” says Paul, “or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which is preached, let him be accursed.”

Let no man, therefore, contend against the Word; nor presume to affirm, without the shadow of Divine proof, that the elect of God, may under *any* circumstances, fall into the commission of Suicide. It is surely impossible; seeing that God, *who cannot lie*, hath declared by the mouth of His faithful Apostle, “*He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE.*” “Many are the afflictions of *the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*” Of *unsanctified* professors, the Lord hath said, “in time of temptation THEY FALL AWAY”; but of the *sanctified* professor, “mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the *end* of that man is PEACE.” (George Hunt, 1848: a pamphlet entitled “The child of God is never permitted to fall into suicide.”)

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1937

### **PRESERVING GRACE**

A few remarks seemed called for upon the article in the preceding issue under this title. The subject of *suicide* is, admittedly, not a pleasant one, and to a few of our readers, probably most painful. We do not expect to return to it again, but ere turning away therefrom desire to throw further light from Scripture thereon, for there are many in this evil day harbouring most God-dishonouring ideas on the matter. Human reasoning in such things is quite worthless; an appeal to carnal sentiment, which is the recourse of the worldling, should not satisfy a child of God: “to the Law and to the Testimony” must ever be the demand of those who desire to see things in the Divine light. The unerring Word of Truth is the final court of appeal to which every problem and question must be submitted. Nor will an appeal thereto be in vain, if we set aside our own preconceptions and prejudices, and approach it in an humble, reverent, and expectant spirit.

Let us put the question in its strongest form: is it possible for a real Christian, under the pressure of sore trial and protracted trouble, for his mind to give way, and in a fit of madness take things into his own hands and make an end of his earthly sufferings? Or, take another case. Insanity sometimes assumes the form of religious melancholia. A person so afflicted often resembles very closely a child of God under deep convictions of sin, which even a minister of Christ may regard as the beginnings of a genuine work of grace in the soul. But the sequel is staggering: instead of that seeming soul-travail being followed by a happy deliverance; tumult and sorrow giving way to peace and joy, the subject of that melancholia lays violent hands upon himself. And then it is that a false charity so often steps in, and with the desire to

comfort the bereaved survivors, it is said that such an one *was* a regenerate soul, but his mind becoming unhinged, and he no longer responsible for his actions, ended his life.

How hard the flesh will appeal for a favourable verdict in such a case! How loath and slow the poor relatives are to submit unto the decision of God's infallible Word. The writer has personally met with those concerning whose spirituality he entertained no doubts, for they appeared to have the hall-mark of the new birth plainly stamped upon them. Even so, we cannot read the heart, and none can say what natural effects a religious training will produce. If the eleven apostles were deceived by Judas, need it be cause for surprise if the best taught and most deeply experienced ministers should sometimes err in their estimate of others today? "The Lord knoweth them that are His" (2 Tim. 2:19) implies that often *we do not*. There is only One who is endowed with omniscience, and He is very jealous of His glory, and therefore does He often stain our pride by making us conscious of *our* fallibility.

But though it be human to err, the Holy Scriptures make no mistakes, and it is by them that this issue is to be decided, for the more our minds be regulated by their teaching, the more shall we be found "thinking God's thoughts after Him." When, then, some insist that a real child of God *may* lay suicidal hands upon himself, we ask, *Where is Scripture* in support of such a horrible affirmation? And the answer is, there is none. Surely this is sufficient to settle the matter for all those who be in subjection to the authority of God. As Mr. Hunt so plainly pointed out, Samson certainly was not guilty of this enormous sin; instead, he died as a godly hero for the good of Israel. It is to be carefully noted that the life of Samson ended by his calling upon the Lord! His last act is one of *prayer*, and it was in direct answer thereto that supernatural strength was granted unto him, so that "the dead which he slew at his death were more than they which he slew in his life" (Judges 16:28, 30).

There is more than one instance of suicide recorded in the Bible, and most solemn and instructive is their testimony. There are three cases in all, and each of them was that of a professor, who belonged externally to the people of God; but in none of them can it be fairly shown that he was a regenerated soul. The first was Saul, the apostate king. It is true that for a brief season he seemed to run well, but the evil spirit which troubled him, his rank disobedience to the Lord, his murderous designs upon David, and his consulting with the witch of Endor, all clearly marked him out as a son of Beliel, before he took his own life (1 Chron. 10:4). The second was Ahithophel, who basely deserted David and befriended Absalom in his insurrection (2 Sam. 17:23). The third was Judas, the traitorous Apostle, who, though he deceived his fellows, was denominated by Christ as "a devil" (John 6:70). Rightly has it been said "These stand forth as so many monuments of the power of Satan, the strength of despair, and the indignation of the Almighty."

This, in itself, is quite sufficient in our judgment to settle the matter: the only ones mentioned in Scripture who directly took their own lives, were not believers, but *unbelievers!* Let the reader carefully ponder that fact. But that is negative evidence; the positive, as we shall see, is equally conclusive. But before weighing that, perhaps a word or two should be said upon what the Spirit has chronicled about Jonah, for the nearest approach to a saint actually committing suicide is his, for he distinctly bade the sailors in the ship "take me up and cast me forth into the sea" (Jonah 1:12). But observe, first, that was designed for *their* good: "So shall the sea be calm *unto you!*" Second, Jonah did not himself jump overboard. Third, as in the case of Samson, the providence of God had designed that he should be a remarkable type of Christ. Finally,

remember that God *miraculously delivered him*, as though to show us that He will not, under any circumstances, suffer one of His own to destroy himself.

The same feature appears most conspicuously in the case of Job. In addition to what was said thereon by Mr. Hunt, it may be pointed out, first, that the situation of that patriarch was a most desperate one and his sufferings almost unprecedented. Second, he was tempted, yea urged by his wicked wife, to resort unto extreme measures: “curse God, and die” (2:9). Third, poor Job ardently longed for death, as that which would put a happy end to his miseries. This is clear from his own words: “O that I might have my request, and that God would grant me the thing that I long for! Even that it would please God to destroy me; that He would let loose His hand and cut me off” (6:8, 9)—recorded, we need hardly say, for our admonition, and not for our imitation. Fourth, yet though he was peeved at death's delay, and fretful because life still remained in him, nevertheless the fact remains that *he did not* destroy himself. The Lord's qualification to Satan—“Behold, he is in thine hand; but save his life” (2:6)—makes it clear that while He allows the Devil to sorely buffet a saint, he cannot take his *life*.

“Is suicide *a sin*, or not? Is rebellion a sin, unbelief a sin, despair a sin? then suicide must be a sin of sins; for it is the last fruit, the highest top and summit of those sins. Can a man who commits it be said to die in faith, or hope, or love? Where is receiving the end of faith, the salvation of the soul, (1 Peter 1:9), if a man die in unbelief, as a suicide must do? How can his hope be “an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb. 6:19) if it break in the storm? And where is love, when he bids defiance to the Almighty by breaking through the bounds of life and death which He has set up? Evidently he dies in sin, and in a sin for which he can have no repentance, for he cuts himself off from repentance by that same act by which he cuts himself off from life” (J. C. Philpot, Gospel Standard, 1861).

How each of us, then, needs to earnestly pray, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe!” (Psa. 119:117). It is naught but sovereign grace which maketh any of us to differ. Probably there are very few Christians but at one time or other seriously pondered suicide, yet the Lord in His covenant-faithfulness either renewed their graces, changed their intentions, or thwarted their efforts—as He did more than once with the hymn-writer of blessed memory, W. Cowper. And to those Christians who are fearful lest such a terrible ending as suicide should be their lot, we close by reminding them of the sure promises of the preserving hand of the Most High over His saints. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord *delivereth him* out of them *all*” (Psa. 34:19). “Who are *kept* by the power of God through faith unto salvation” (1 Peter 1:5).

“He that is begotten of God keepeth himself, and that Wicked One toucheth him not” (1 John 5:18). These are strong testimonies to show that Jehovah will not allow Satan to prevail over any of His chosen ones.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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April, 1937

### EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING

It was our desire to say more upon this in the Hebrews' article in this issue, but so as not to unduly lengthen it, we decided to write a separate article thereon. The subject is one of great practical importance and value, though sadly neglected by the modern pulpit. By “experimental preaching” we mean preaching that analyses, diagnoses, describes the strange and often bewildering experience of the Christian. As we have pointed out before, there is a real distinction to be drawn between Christian experience and the experience of the Christian. True Christian experience consists of a knowledge of Christ, communion with Him, conformity to Him. But the experience of a Christian grows out of the conflict of the two natures within—natures which are radically different in their character, tendency, and products. In consequence of that conflict there is a ceaseless warfare going on within him, issuing in a series of defeats and victories, victories and defeats. These, in turn, produce joy and sorrow, doubtings and confidence, fears and peace; until often he knows not what to think or how to place himself.

Now it is one important and fundamental part of the office of God's minister to trace out the workings of sin and the actings of grace in the believer's heart; to turn the light of Scripture upon the mysterious anomaly of what is daily taking place in the Christian's soul; to enable him to determine how far he is growing in grace or is backsliding from the Lord. It is his business to take the stumbling stones out of the way of Zion's travelers, to explain to them “*the mystery of the Gospel,*” to define the grounds of true assurance, and to undermine a carnal confidence. It is an essential part of his task as preacher to trace out the work of the Spirit in the regenerate, and to show He is a Spirit of “judgment” as well as consolation, a

Spirit of “burning” (Isa. 4:4) as well as building, that He wounds as well as heals.

The human soul possesses three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will; and the Word of God is addressed to each of them. Consequently the preaching of the Word comes under this general threefold classification: doctrinal preaching, experimental, and hortatory. Doctrinal preaching expounds the great truths and facts which constitute the substance of Holy Writ, and has for its prime aim the instruction of the hearer, the enlightening of his mind. Experimental preaching concerns the actual application of salvation to the individual and traces out the operations of the Spirit in the effectuation thereof, having for its main object the stirring of the affections. Hortatory preaching deals with the requirements of God and the obligations of the hearer, takes up the exhortations and warnings of Scripture, calls to the discharge of duty, and is addressed principally to the will. And it is only as these three fundamental offices of the minister are adequately and wisely *combined*, that the pulpit has performed its proper functions.

Doctrinal preaching treats of the character of God, proclaims His attributes, extols His perfections. It deals with the nature of man, his accountability to God, his obligation to serve and glorify Him. It exalts the Law, and presses its requirement that we love the Lord God with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves. It is concerned with showing what sin is, its enormity, its workings, its consequences. It delineates God's wondrous salvation, and shows the grace from which it springs, the wisdom which contrived it, the holiness which required it, the love that secured it. It describes what the Church is, both universally and locally. It expounds the ordinances: their significance, their purpose, their value.

Experimental preaching deals with the actual experience of those upon whom and in whom God works. It begins with their natural estate, as those who were shapen in iniquity and conceived in sin. It shows how, as fallen creatures, we are sin's slaves and Satan's serfs. It describes the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, its pride and self-righteousness. It treats of man's spiritual impotency, and the hypocrisy and uselessness of making this a ground of self-pity, and an excuse for slothfulness. It delineates the workings of the Spirit when He convicts of sin, and the effects this produces in the subject of it. It takes up the heart exercises of an awakened soul, and seeks to counsel, admonish, and comfort.

Hortatory preaching is concerned with the claims of God upon us, and how we should endeavour to meet the same. It bids us remember the Creator in the days of our youth, and affirms that our chief end is to glorify Him. It bids us throw down the weapons of our warfare against Him, and seek reconciliation with Him. It calls upon us to repent of our sins, forsake our wicked ways, and sue for mercy through Christ. It emphasises the various motives unto obedience. It describes the life which the Christian is required to live, and exhorts him to deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Christ. In short, it enforces the righteous demands of the Lord, and urges unto a compliance therewith.

Now it is in *a due combination* of these three distinct lines of preaching that the best results are likely to ensue. Care needs to be exercised that the balance is properly maintained. If there be a disproportionate dwelling on any one of these, souls are likely to be hindered rather than helped. There needs to be *variety* in our mental and spiritual food, as much as there is in our material, and He who has graciously furnished the latter in Nature, has mercifully provided the former in His Word. If a person ate nothing but meat, his

system would soon be clogged; if he confined himself to sweets, his stomach would quickly be soured. It is so spiritually. A surfeit of doctrinal preaching produces swelled heads; too much experimental induces morbidity, and nothing but hortatory issues in legality.

Alas, one of the most lamentable features of Christendom is the *lopsidedness* of present-day ministry. Where the Law is faithfully expounded, the Gospel is conspicuous by its absence, and where the Gospel is freely proclaimed, the Law is rigidly excluded. Even when a more or less balanced doctrine is maintained, there is very little experimental preaching, yea, it is generally decried as harmful, as fostering doubts, as getting us occupied with ourselves instead of Christ. In those places where really helpful experimental preaching *is* to be heard, the hortatory note is never raised: promises are freely quoted, but the precepts are shelved, while exhorting the unregenerate to repent and believe in Christ is denounced as inculcating creature ability and as insulting to the Holy Spirit. In other quarters, one might hear little or nothing except our duties—becoming personal workers, giving to missions etc.—which is like whipping a horse that has had no food.

But of the three it is *experimental* preaching which is given least place in our day. So much so is this the case, that many of God's poor people and not a few preachers themselves, have never so much as heard the expression. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at, for experimental preaching is by far *the most difficult* of the three. A little reading and study is all that is required to equip one naturally (we do not say spiritually) to prepare a doctrinal sermon, while a novice, a “young convert,” is deemed capable of standing at a street-corner and urging all and sundry to receive Christ as their personal Saviour. But *a personal experience* of the Truth is indispensable before one can helpfully preach along experimental lines: such sermons have to be hammered out on the anvil of the preacher's own heart. An unregenerate man may preach most orthodoxly on doctrine, but he cannot describe the operations of the Spirit in the heart to any good purpose.

Though experimental preaching be the hardest task which the preacher has to perform, yet it is needful he attend to it, and when the blessing of God rests thereon, salutary are its effects. It is calculated to expose empty professors—both to themselves and others—more effectually than any other type of sermon, for it shows at length that the saving of a soul is very much more than a sudden “decision” on my part or believing that Christ died in my room and stead; for it is a supernatural work of the Spirit in the heart. Such preaching is most likely to open the eyes of sincere but deceived souls, for as they are shown *what* the work of the Spirit is, and *the effects it produces*, they will discover a miracle of grace has been wrought in them. While nothing is so apt to establish trembling believers, above all, it honours the Spirit Himself.

Let us now point out *along what lines* experimental preaching is to proceed in order to be most helpful to the saints. First and primarily, its business is to show *of what* “Salvation” consists in its actual application to the individual. Doctrinal preaching lays the foundation for this by an exposition of the grand truth of Election (which makes known the blessed fact that God has chosen a people unto salvation: 2 Thess. 2:13), and by opening up the subject of the Atonement, showing how Christ has fully satisfied every requirement of Divine justice upon the elect, thereby purchasing redemption for them. Doctrinal preaching is *the means* which the Spirit uses in the enlightenment, conviction and conversion of the elect, and the practical value of experimental preaching is that it enables concerned and attentive hearers to ascertain *what stage* has

been reached in the Spirit's work in them.

In taking up the Spirit's application of that salvation which the Father ordained and the Son secured, the preacher first shows *how* the soul is prepared to receive it. By nature his heart is as hard and unresponsive to the Truth as the “highway” is to the reception of wheat: so there has to be a preliminary plowing and harrowing, a breaking up and turning over of the soil of his soul before the Word will obtain entrance and take root therein. Experimental preaching, then, will show *which* of his hearers is still accurately pictured by the “wayside” around, namely, those whose hearts are thoroughly antagonistic to God's claims upon them, those who are unconcerned about their eternal interests, those who wish to be left alone and undisturbed in their pleasures and worldly interests. The preacher will then press upon them the woeful state they are in, the terribleness of their condition, that they are dead toward God, devoid of any actual interest in spiritual things.

As the preacher develops and follows out the above line of thought, those who have been quickened and awakened by the Spirit of God will be better able to place themselves. As they measure themselves by the message, as they apply to themselves what the minister is saying (which the hearer should ever do if he is to “take heed *how* ye hear”: Luke 8:18), he will perceive that by the sovereign grace of God it is now no longer with him as it once was. He will recall the time when *he too* sat under the preaching of the Word with stoical indifference, when it was a meaningless jumble to him, a weariness to sit through. He will remember he rarely gave more than a passing thought as to where he would spend eternity. But now it is otherwise. He is no longer unconcerned, but is truly anxious to be saved. The preacher will point out that this is a hopeful sign, but must press the fact that it is *not* one to be rested in, that it is the height of folly and most dangerous to be contented with anything short of the full assurance of faith.

Again; the preacher will show that the great work of the Spirit in preparing the heart for a saving reception of the Gospel, consists in revealing to the individual *his dire need of Christ*, and this is accomplished by His making him to see and feel what a *vile sinner* he is in the sight of God. A life belt receives little notice from those who are safe on dry ground, but let a man be drowning in the water and he will eagerly grasp at and deeply appreciate one. They that are whole need not a physician, but when they are desperately sick he is most welcome. So it is spiritually. Let a man be unconscious of his moral leprosy, unconcerned of how he appears in the eyes of the Holy One, and salvation is little considered by him. But let him be convicted of his lifelong rebellion against God, let him discover that there is “no soundness” in him, let him realise that the wrath of God abideth on him, and he is ready to give the Gospel an earnest hearing.

Now the great *instrument* or means used by the Spirit in bringing the people to see their ruined and lost condition is *the Law*, for “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). A striking illustration of this is found in Nehemiah 8. There we read of Ezra ministering to those who had returned from the Babylonian captivity: “And Ezra the priest brought the Law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that was before the watergate *from the morning until mid-day*, before the men and the women, and those that could understand, and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the Law” (vv. 2, 3). He, in turn, was assisted by others, who “caused the people to understand the Law: and the people stood in their place. So they read in the book of the Law of God distinctly, and gave the sense” (vv. 7, 8).

And what was the outcome? This, “all the people *wept* when they heard the words of the Law” (v. 9). The Spirit had applied it to their hearts in power; they were convicted of their wicked self-will and self-pleasing, their disobedience and defiance to the Lord, and they repented of the same and mourned before Him.

God wounds before He heals, and abases before He exalts. When the Spirit applies the Law to a sinner's heart, his self-complacency is shattered and his self-righteousness receives its death-wound. When he is brought to realise the justice of the Law's requirements, discovers that it demands perfect and perpetual conformity to the revealed will of God in thought and word and deed, then he perceives that “innumerable evils have encompassed him about,” his iniquities “take hold of him” so that he cannot look up, and he recognizes that his sins are “more than the hairs of his head” (Psa. 40:12). Such an experience is beyond misunderstanding: those subject to the same cannot mistake it. Unspeakably painful though it be, it is most necessary if man's proud heart is to be humbled and made receptive to the Gospel of God's grace. Such an experience evidences that God has not abandoned him to a heart that is “past feeling” (Eph. 4:19), yet this is not to be rested in as though the goal had been reached.

So far from a state of becoming aroused to see our danger and be concerned about our eternal destiny being, of itself, something to complacently rest in, assured that all will certainly end well, it is one that is full of peril. Satan is never more active than when he discovers souls are being awakened, for he is loathe to lose his captives, and redoubles his efforts to retain them. It is then that he transforms himself as an angel of light, and performs his most subtle and successful work. There are multitudes, my reader, who were shaken out of their indifference, and became diligent in seeking the way of salvation. But false guides misled them, and they were fatally deceived: as Ezekiel 13:22 expresses it, they “strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life.” The sinner must “*forsake his way*” *before* he can return to the Lord and find pardon (Isa. 55:7).

Not until we actually *comply* with the terms of the Gospel, not until we really *close* with Christ as He is presented therein, is forgiveness obtainable. To stop anywhere short of that, is to gravely endanger the soul's going to sleep on the Devil's “enchanted ground”—to borrow a figure from Bunyan. It is therefore the pressing duty of the preacher to sound the alarm here, and warn awakened souls of the danger of taking their ease, assuming that all is well. The foolish virgins “went forth to meet the Bridegroom” but they went to sleep, and when they awoke it was *too late* to procure the requisite oil! It is good that the ground should be plowed, yet that is only the preliminary work—seed must actually be sown and take root therein ere there can be any fruit. The anxious soul, then, must be continually exhorted to make sure that “the root of the matter” (Job 19:28) is in him.

This brings us to the next important stage or branch of experimental preaching: the making clear unto the concerned *how* it may be ascertained whether or no “the root of the matter” *is* in them; in other words, whether a work of grace has actually been started in their souls. This is a point of vast importance, for it concerns the vital difference between the general and special work of the Spirit—on which we wrote at some length when expounding Hebrews 6:4-6. But the determining if a “good work” has been begun in the soul is far too important for us to dismiss with a few sentences. And too, we desire to also take up the later experiences of a Christian. It will therefore be necessary for us to devote another article to the further

consideration of this many-sided and momentous subject of experimental preaching.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### SERVANTS OF GOD.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). In this verse the Holy Spirit presents to us an epitome of the exceeding great and precious privileges which are the birthright of the child of God, of *every* real believer in the Lord Jesus. The important truths presented in the previous verses, and indeed throughout the whole of this Epistle, are here summarized, for the clearer apprehension and assurance of faith, that the Christian might see at a glance what is his true standing in the sight of God, and what are those wondrous blessings which Divine grace has bestowed upon him; and this, that his heart may be drawn more and more away from the world, that he may delight himself in and glorify his Lord and Master. Four grand facts are presented for faith to lay hold of. First, the believer has been gloriously emancipated: “being made free from sin.” Second, he is now consecrated: “become servants to God.” Third, he is, in union with Christ, as a branch of the true Vine, fruitful unto holiness. Fourth, the end before him, the sure issue of all his conflicts and trials is “everlasting life.”

In the verse before us the Apostle is not seeking to *persuade* Christians to separate from sin, he is not *promising* that upon the fulfillment of certain conditions they will enter into freedom from sin, but is *stating a positive fact*, which is true of *every* believer. He is not dealing with a contingency, or speaking of some future good, but affirms a present reality: “but *now* being made free from sin.” This is not a matter of attainment, but a miracle of Divine grace, Christ has “made an end of sins,” He has made “reconciliation for iniquity,” He has brought in “everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24); and because the believer is

identified with Christ, because in the sight of the Judge of all the earth he is legally one with the Redeemer, he is now, judicially, “free from sin”—its penalty has been endured, its guilt has been blotted out, its condemnation has been removed. “But now being made free from sin” is in the *passive* voice, for it is an act of grace upon us, and *not* an act put forth by us; it is an act of which we are the subjects, and not a work of which we are the agents.

“And become servants to God” (Rom. 6:22). Here, too, as in the preceding clause, the Apostle is dwelling upon the believer's *standing before God*. Divine grace has given him a new status: in his unregenerate days he was “the servant of sin” (v. 20): sin was his master, he was its subject. But because of his legal oneness with Christ; and because of his vital union with Him (when the Spirit created him anew in Christ), he now has a new standing and a new Master. Being made free from sin (judicially), he has become “servant to God.” Here again the passive is used; it is *not* by an act of theirs, but by God's omnipotent act of grace which grafted them into Christ, constituting them one with Jehovah's Servant, which made them “servants to God.” This is the necessary and blessed sequel to our having been “made free from sin.” Said David of old, “O LORD, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, *and* the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast *loosed my bonds*” (Psa. 116:16).

What, then, is the believer's responsibility in connection with this blessed fact, what is to be his *response* thereto? First, to *believe* it, to receive it by childlike and unquestioning faith, and that, on the sole but sufficient testimony of God's own Word. Second, to *conduct* himself accordingly, to submit himself unto God, to be in complete subjection to the will of his new Master, to obey Him in all things. His bounden duty and his blessed privilege is to now translate that grand fact into his own practical experience: to be God's intelligent, willing, dutiful servant, to endeavour to please Him at all times, to seek to honour and glorify Him on every occasion. The Christian is to recognize his new status, utterly deserting his old master, and loving and obeying his new One with all his heart and mind. This is the victory of faith. This is the return which is due from us unto God's amazing grace toward us. This is to show forth our oneness with God's perfect Servant, to follow the example which He has left us.

Freedom from sin is the direct consequence of our union with the Lord Jesus, and the fact of our being the servants of God is also and equally the result of that union. We have no standing before God as His servants, no power for service, no spirit for service, no acceptance of our service, except in our union with Christ. Only as this is realized by faith, and only as we truly exercise faith therein, will there be any actual making good of it in our experience and daily walk. This is but another way of saying that, only as our hearts are truly conscious of the fact that we are *not our own*, but the purchased property of God, shall we conduct ourselves accordingly. The same grand truth is expressed again in “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works” (Eph. 2:10). If we be the servants of God, it is because we are created in Christ Jesus for that very service: just as our being made free from sin was owing to the work of Christ for us, so we are created in Him for this very privilege of service.

How frequently in Scripture is Christ presented to us as God's Servant. Jehovah had but one perfect Servant here, One with whom He was altogether pleased, to whom He could with implicit confidence entrust the affairs of the covenant, namely, Jesus Christ. Of Him God says, “Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth” (Isa. 42:1); “Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently”

(Isa. 52:13); “By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many” (Isa. 53:11). In the New Testament we find the Apostle Paul calling attention to this: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of *a servant*, and was made in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:5-7); and we have Him announcing Himself on the earth “Lo! I come, to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:7)—do it unreservedly, do it joyfully, do it unceasingly, no matter what it involved.

It is refreshing to the heart to read through the four Gospels with this thought in view, and observe how often Christ is there seen in this special character. “The Son of man came not to be ministered unto; but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:28). See Him in John 4, sitting weary at the well. The disciples go to buy bread, and on returning they found Him full of love, life and power, speaking to the poor woman of Samaria. They said “Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? and He answered, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me” (vv. 33, 34). Behold, God's perfect Servant! And again He said, “For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38). So too in Gethsemane “Not as I will, but as Thou wilt” exemplified His changeless attitude of perfect submission to the Father.

Nor has Christ ceased to be God's Servant, no, not even though He is now exalted high above all angels, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High. As Hebrews 8:2 tells us, He is the “Minister (or Servant) of the Sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.” He is there discharging His priestly office, ever living to make intercession for His people. He is there, active, as the Angel of the Covenant. It was thus that John beheld Him in the apocalyptic visions, standing at the altar in Heaven, “having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints” (Rev. 8:3). He is there discharging His kingly office, “upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). He is there preparing a place for us (John 14:2). He is there, submissively, subjecting Himself to God's will, “expecting till His enemies be made His footstool” (Heb. 10:13). Behold, Jehovah's perfect Servant, and our perfect Exemplar.

And you and I, dear Christian reader, are “*servants to God*. It is a great privilege and high honour to be the servants of an earthly monarch, but who can conceive the dignity and honour of being a servant of the Most High, the only Potentate! When Paul would glory in his calling, he made mention of the Lord, saying “whose I am and whom I *serve*.” When Peter would magnify his office, he wrote “Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). When James would present his credentials to his readers, he wrote “James, a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:1); so too with Jude (1:1). When the queen of Sheba came that long journey to hear and see the wisdom of Solomon, she said, “Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom” (1 Kings 10:8). O, my reader, if the servants of Solomon were happy and privileged, how much more so are the servants of the living God!

The service of God is one of *freedom*, yea, it is the only one where perfect freedom is to be found; yet that is the very opposite of the natural man's idea, So thoroughly has sin perverted his judgment and blinded his mind, that he calls light darkness and darkness light, bitters sweet and sweets bitter. The unregenerate suppose that to be in subjection to God is the end of all freedom, and entering into the most irksome

bondage; and, contrariwise, they imagine that the more they refuse Divine restraints, the greater their liberty. Poor deluded souls: it is the service of sin which tyrannizes and enslaves. “For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness . . . but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God” (Rom. 6:20, 22). It is the servant of God, the one who willingly renders obedience to Him, that is “the Lord's *freeman*” (1 Cor. 7:22). God does not force His people into His service, but constrains them by His love, and their language is, “I will walk at *liberty*: for I seek Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:45).

“Become servants to God.” A good master provides for his servants. Is not God a good Master? O how He thinks of and provides for His servants. He supplies their every need both spiritual and temporal, makes all things work together for their good, and protects them as they journey through the Enemy's land. The realization of this should comfort and stabilize our hearts, and it should encourage us to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, and seek from God fresh supplies of grace and temporal mercies, on the ground that we *are* His “servants.” Turn to the Psalms and see how frequently David did so: you will find that again and again he asked of God and presented *this* as his plea: “Save *Thy servant*”; “Cause Thy face to shine upon *Thy servant*”; “hear the prayer of *Thy servant*.” So in the New Testament we behold aged Simeon looking death in the face and saying, “Lord, now lettest *Thy servant* depart in peace.” It is indeed a wondrous blessing to be the servant of God, and have such an One to look after us.

But this great privilege and honour carries with it a definite responsibility, namely, to conduct ourselves *as* “servants.” A good servant is described in Scripture as one who has *a watchful eye*: “Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God” (Psa. 123:2)—in the Orient, instead of giving directions by word of mouth, they are often given by a gesture of the hand or glance of the eye. A good servant, then, will be attentive to his Master's will, that there may be no delay in pleasing Him. A good servant will have *a listening ear*: “speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth” (1 Sam 3:9). A good servant will have *ready feet*: “I will run in the way of Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:32). A good servant will have a *submissive will*; that is the primary and essential qualification—to have no will of my own, but to be completely yielded to the Lord.

“Christian service” is a vastly different thing from that which is so designated in modern Christendom. In many places doing what is termed “personal work” and “winning souls to Christ” is what now passes for “Christian service,” and thousands are thus engaged who were never called nor qualified by God for it. Others suppose that only those whom God has called to occupy the pulpit or sent forth to evangelize the heathen, are His “servants.” Such are His *official* servants, and none others have any title to occupy such a position. But *all* Christians are the servants of God: called to a life of obedience, whether they are shoeblacks, street-sweepers, or housewives. Having delivered him from the power of Darkness, the believer is now to live unto God and for Him in whatever position Divine providence has called him to occupy.

In conclusion let it be pointed out that *a rich reward* is promised the good and faithful servant. The Lord Jesus declared “Where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). “There shall be no

more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3). Now serving Him in the office, the shop, or the kitchen, then serving Him in the courts of the Father's House above.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1937

### **EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING.**

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (finish) it” (Phil. 1:6). And *how* is an exercised soul to ascertain whether this “good work” has actually begun in him? How is he to distinguish between the natural workings of conscience and the supernatural conviction which the Holy Spirit produces? How is he to distinguish between the spasmodic religiousness of the flesh—which appears conspicuously in many of the devotees of Mohammed and the worshippers of the Virgin Mary, and finds its counterpart in thousands of those who come under the magnetic influence of “Evangelists” and “Revivalists”—and true spiritual aspirations after God? How is he to distinguish between a radical moral reformation and a Divine regeneration—for some of the effects of the one closely resemble those of the other? How is he to distinguish between the general work of the Spirit on the non-elect (like king Saul and those described in Heb. 6:4, 5) and the special work of the Spirit in the elect?

Such questions as the above may never have arisen in the minds of some of our readers, and now that they have seen them raised, may consider them as “hair-splitting” or theological distinctions of little practical interest. But others of our readers are deeply exercised by such considerations. They dare not take it for granted that all is well with them, until they are satisfied from God's Word that a miracle of grace *has* been wrought in them. They fear that Satan may be deceiving them with his lies, comforting with a *false* assurance. As they seek to contemplate an endless eternity unto which time is so swiftly conducting them, they are deeply anxious to make sure whither they are bound. And well may such inquiries disturb our serenity, and agitate our minds: they are of vital moment, of vast importance—for they concern the

difference there is between life and death, Heaven and Hell.

It is an essential branch of experimental preaching that must deal with such momentous issues. It is the bounden duty of the pulpit to afford help unto such exercised souls. It is the office of the minister to take up such distinctions and show clearly wherein the difference lies. It is the business of God's servant to define and describe *of what* the “good work” of the Spirit consists, and *how* it may be identified. That “good work” is but another name for the new birth, which consists of the Spirit's communicating to the heart a new nature, a principle of grace and holiness. It is the impartation of that which is radically different from anything that was in us by nature. It is something which has come from God, is Godlike in its nature, and which instinctively turns unto God. It is discoverable by the fact that there is now in the soul *a relish* for spiritual things, which was not there previously; a “relish” which goes far, far deeper than a mere intellectual interest being awakened in a new subject. It evidences itself by a hungering after righteousness, a thirsting for holiness, pantings after God Himself, yearnings for Christ.

But while an entirely new nature is imparted at regeneration, the old one is not removed, nor is it even *improved* or refined. The old nature, the “flesh,” indwelling sin, remains in the Christian to the end of his earthly life and is a constant source of grief to him. It opposes every aspiration and effort of the new nature. It is earthly, sensual, devilish, and craves only that which the swine feed on. Nor does the finishing of that “good work” in the soul effect any change for the better in the flesh, or even render it less active. No, the carrying on of that “good work” is the *preserving* of a spark of grace in an ocean of sin, the *maintaining* of the new nature in a heart that is desperately and incurably wicked. Notwithstanding every effort of carnal enmity to quench it, love for God survives—“faint, *yet pursuing*” (Judg. 8:4); and despite all the ragings of unbelief, faith's head is kept above the waters.

Just as the natural infant clings instinctively to its mother and yearns for her breast, so the spiritual babe seeks after Christ and desires the pure milk of the Word. *That* is another evidence of the Spirit's “good work” in the soul. The Spirit's quickening is in order to capacitate the *heart* for Christ, for one who is yet “dead in trespasses and sins” has neither spiritual desires nor spiritual ability. But once a person has been born again, and truly convicted of his ruined and lost condition, he is spiritually fitted to receive the Gospel. It is at this point he is ready to hear how the Spirit works in revealing Christ to such, bringing them to believe on Him, and thereby putting them into actual possession of Him. The Spirit causes the quickened soul to live over the truth of the Gospel in his own mind, moves him to give full credit thereto, mix faith with the same, and derive spiritual nourishment from it.

As the truth of the Gospel is received into the heart—in some cases rapidly, in others much more slowly—it becomes the means of the believer's growing into an experimental and practical acquaintance with Christ, to be rooted and grounded in Him, to live upon Him. When God is pleased to shine upon the souls of the elect, and make an open discovery to them of His work of grace within them, or when Christ is first made a living and precious reality to their hearts, there is a going forth of their spiritual affections unto Him. All seems to be life and vigour in their souls, difficulties vanish, doubts are dispelled, they are quite carried out of themselves, lifted above their sins and iniquities, and made to rejoice in Christ and praise God for His wondrous grace. This is “the love of thine espousals” (Jer. 2:2), the “joy of salvation.”

It is very rare, however, that this blissful season is of long duration, and wisely has God so ordered this. Such spiritual ecstasy which is often experienced by newly-converted souls would, if it lasted, unfit them for the discharge of life's duties in this world. For example, one engaged in office work would be unable to concentrate on his books if his mind were rapt with visions of glory. There was only one Elim—with its well of water and palm trees—for Israel in the wilderness. God grants His people a foretaste of Heaven and its realities, and then brings them down to a consciousness that they are still on earth. Even the Apostle Paul needed a thorn in the flesh, lest he be exalted above measure, after he had been caught up to Paradise. Heavy ballast is needed in her hold if the ship is to sail steadily, and this the believer obtains by painful discoveries of his *corruptions*.

It is therefore the duty of the preacher to faithfully warn the young convert that the peace, joy and assurance which usually follows the first realization of sins' forgiveness, will in turn be succeeded by fierce temptations, inward conflicts, sad failures which will produce grief, darkness, and doubtings. It was so with Abraham, with Moses, with Job, with Peter, with Paul; yea, with all the saints whose biographies are recorded at any length in the Scriptures. Great changes are to be expected in the young convert's feelings and frames, so that his comforts are dampened, and the dew of death seems to settle upon his graces. A deeper realization of his awful depravity—what he is by nature—will make him groan and cry out “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24); yet that only makes way for a fuller and further weaning from *self*.

Very often the young Christian is allowed by God to sink yet lower in his experience. Satan is let loose upon him and sin rages fiercely within him, and strive and pray as he may, it often obtains the upper hand over him. Guilt weighs heavily on his conscience, no relief is granted from any source until he now seriously questions the genuineness of his conversion and greatly fears that Satan has fatally deceived him. He feels that his heart is as hard as the nether millstone, that faith in him is dead, that there is no help and no hope for him. He cannot imagine that one who has been born again and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit could be so enslaved by sin. If God *were* his Father, He would surely hear his cries and grant deliverance from his spiritual enemies. But the heavens are as brass over him until the very breath of prayer seems frozen within him.

Hoping against hope he seeks relief from the pulpit. But in vain. The sermons he hears only aggravate his woes for they depict the Christian's experience as vastly different from his own: they deal with the bright side and say little or nothing on the dark side. If he converses with the professing Christians of the day he is likely to get laughed at, and told to cease being occupied with himself and look only to Christ—to lay hold of the promises of God and go on his way rejoicing. *That* is the very thing he most of all desires: “to will IS present” with him, “but how to perform that which is good” he “finds NOT” (Rom. 7:18). Poor soul! is there no one that understands his case? no one qualified to minister comfort to him? Alas, alas, there are few indeed in this frothy age.

Here, again, *experimental* preaching is urgently needed, preaching which enters into the very experiences described above—experiences shared, in some measure, by all quickened souls while they are in this “Wilderness of Sin.” But O what wisdom from on High (not from books!) is needed if, on the one hand, the “smoking *flax*” is not to be “quenched” and the “bruised need” be not broken—on the other hand, sin

be not made light of, failures be not excused, and the standard of holiness be not lowered. The pulpit should declare frankly that there are times when the mind of the believer is filled with deep distress, that there are seasons when the light of God's countenance is turned away from His people, and the Devil is permitted to sorely wound them, tell them that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that there is no hope for them; but that such experiences *are no proof* at all that they are still unregenerate.

The preacher has to bear steadily in mind that if there are among his hearers carnal professors who are ready to seize eagerly anything which would bolster them up in their false assurance, there are also feeble and ailing babes in Christ which require tender nursing (Isa. 60:4; 1 Thess. 2:7), and little ones of God's family who lack assurance, and because of this think the worst of themselves. It is therefore wise business to “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15:19): that is, by a *discriminating* ministry expose and terrify the sin-hardened, but speak words of comfort to the real mourners in Zion. “In our congregations there are wheat and chaff on the same floor: we cannot distinguish them by *name*, but we must by *character*” (Matthew Henry). We must make it clear that those who regard sin lightly, have not the fear of God before their eyes; those not grieved because they find so much in their hearts opposed to Divine holiness, *are unregenerate*—no matter how much head-knowledge of the Truth they possess or how loud be their Christian profession

It is at this very point that the true under-shepherd of Christ stands out in marked contrast from the “hireling” of the flock, concerning whom God says, “Ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (Ezek. 13:22). On the one hand, the regenerate are “made sad” by pratings about “the victorious life,” or “the second blessing,” or “the baptism of the Spirit.” These blind leaders of the blind claim to have so “got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8,” to have so left behind them all inward conflicts and agonizing doubtings, as to virtually have entered into the state of the glorified—causing real Christians to conclude that *they* know nothing of that Gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation” and must be complete strangers to a miracle of grace within them.

On the other hand, these false prophets declare that all who have “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour” are saved, even though they have not yet received the second blessing, that they are justified though not “entirely sanctified.” They assure the godless, the worldling, the pleasure-intoxicated, that they may be saved at this very moment on the sole and simple condition that they believe God so loved them as to give His Son to die for them. Thus peace is assured to the unconcerned “when there is no peace,” the hearts of the careless are hardened, and the wicked are promised life without any regard to God's demand that they must “forsake” their idols. “Nor can anything strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways” (Matthew Henry).

The duty of God's servants is clearly enough defined in this respect: “They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezek. 44:23). Surely it is of vast importance that a deeply exercised soul should know whether or not *his* sins have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. But for *that*, teaching is necessary, teaching from a Divinely-qualified teacher; for if an inexperienced “novice” lays his hand to such a task he will only make

bad matters worse and add to the fearful confusion which now prevails on every side. Only one who has himself sailed much in these deep waters is fitted to serve as pilot to floundering ships; none but one who had been harassed by Satan as Bunyan had, could have written “The Pilgrim's Progress.”

“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort *wherewith we ourselves* are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:4) states the principle. One who has actually suffered from a serious disease is best fitted to recognize symptoms of it in others and recommend the remedies which he found most efficacious. Furthermore, one must be personally taught by the Spirit before he can explain to sin-sick and Satan-tormented souls the “mystery of the Gospel”—the strange paradoxes of the Christian life. It is one thing to *read* “for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10), it is quite another matter to *prove* the truth of it in actual experience. Nor is that statement any more paradoxical than the fact that it is the spiritually “poor” who are spiritually rich (Matt. 5:3). And equally true is it that those who most clearly perceive their filthiness and mourn over their pollution are they who have the best evidence that *their* sins have been washed away; as the most humble souls are the ones who most bewail their pride.

It is by no means easy to combine tenderness with faithfulness, sympathy for doubting sons with a deep concern for the honour of God. Of old the Lord complained, “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people *slightly*, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11). We have personally met not a few who were pitying themselves when they should have been condemning themselves, hugging their doubts instead of contritely confessing them to God. Unbelief is *not* a virtue, but a heinous *sin*; it is to be reproved, and never excused. There is no real relief for a badly festered limb by scratching the skin: the lancet must pierce right down to the seat of the trouble if the poisonous matter is to be pressed out. Self-love, self-complacency, self-righteousness must be thoroughly probed by the knife of the Word before the heart will be broken before God.

The great issue between God and man is SIN, and salvation is deliverance from sin. True, that in the fullest meaning of the term, salvation is not complete in this life, for glorification is included within its scope; nevertheless there is a very real sense in which the believer is initially saved even now. In other words, there is a present aspect of salvation, as well as a future; and that present salvation is an experimental thing, as well as judicial. But it is just at this point the conscientious Christian confronts his most acute problem: how dare he profess to be saved from sin, or even regard himself as now *being* saved from it, when sin rages so fiercely within and so often gets the upper hand of him?

Here, again, the business of the preacher is to throw light upon this problem. First, by showing that the believer is *not* yet saved from the *presence* of sin, for it still indwells him; nor is he saved from the *power* of sin, except relatively, for it is still a mighty force within him, utterly beyond his control. Second, by showing that the believer *is* now saved *from the love of sin*. THAT is the essence of the matter. The thrice holy God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13), and therefore He abhors all sin, saying, “Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate” (Jer. 44:4). But man by nature *loves* sin, therefore the first thing God does in salvation is to put within His people a principle or nature that *hates* sin.

But here, too, we must pass from generalities and get down to details. The honest soul will at once ask, If I

really hate sin, why do I so often yield to it? If I have been delivered from the love of sin, why can Satan's temptations still appeal to me? The answer is, because the “flesh” is still left in you, and it remains *unholy* to the end of its history. Our responsibility is to “make not provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14), to “mortify” its members (Col. 3:5), to unsparingly judge it, root and branch (1 Cor. 11:31, 32), to confess its evil works (1 John 1:9). The fact that the believer resists sin, prays and strives against it, mourns and groans over it, loathes himself for it, are so many proofs that he no longer loves it as he once did. Here, then, is the task of experimental preaching, to make clear what salvation is, and what it is not; to trace out the heart's history of one who is being saved, and this in such a way that the unregenerate are not emboldened in their sins, nor the regenerate crushed by their defeats. There is urgent need to show what the love of sin consists of, and then to describe *how* a holy hatred of sin may be recognized, and what is compatible and what is not compatible with this hatred.—A.W.P.

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June, 1937

### **A Prayer.**

O my God and Father! my heart is naked and open to Thee. Thou knowest the secrets of it. Thou seest how fervently I pray for the abiding presence of the Holy Spirit. My prayer comes from a feeling sense of my want of Him, and from a dependence on Thy promise to give the Spirit to them that ask for Him. Lord! I ask. Grant me to be strengthened by Him with every needful gift and grace in the inner man. Send Him to manifest plainer and plainer my union with Christ, in order to my keeping up communion with Him, that, having Him dwelling in my heart by faith, I may be established in the experience of Thy love to me in Him. (W. Romaine)

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### Experimental Preaching

Our principle object in these articles is, under God, to open the eyes of preachers (to quite a number of whom this magazine is sent) to see the necessity and importance of taking up some of the soul-exercises which occasion so much concern to their most interested hearers, and to offer some suggestions along what lines this may be accomplished. Incidentally, we are endeavouring to make them of interest and profit to the general reader as well. Much skill and spiritual wisdom are required to speak on those subjects which more immediately affect the experience of Christians, and those are acquired only by the anointing of the Spirit and a careful analysis and diagnosis of our own inward life. It is just as requisite for the preacher to make a study of *the human heart*, as to be assiduous in the reading of books, otherwise he will not know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary.

To know what our spiritual state really is, and what our practical acquaintance with Christ actually amounts to is most desirable and profitable, for it arms us against our spiritual enemies, puts a stop to doubting, and causes us to glory in the Lord. But to describe clearly and declare fully the influences and operations of the Spirit within us, as they truly are, is a very difficult task. It is much easier to preach the *doctrine* of grace, than to describe *the effects* of it when applied to the heart of God. It is to those portions of the Word which treat most directly and largely with the exercises of the heart that the preacher should turn, both for guidance and material. Much in the Book of Job and in the Lamentations will afford help; but it is in *the Psalms* more particularly that the Spirit has recorded the varied breathings and traced out the diverse experiences of “the living in Jerusalem.”

True Christian experience may be defined as *the teaching of God in the soul*, an inward acquaintance with Divine things. It is a feeling sense of their reality, in contrast from a mere notional and theoretical knowledge of them, so that we know them not “in word only, but also *in power*, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1 Thess. 1:5). It is the Spirit's application of the Truth to the soul, so that what is written in the Word is now inscribed on the heart. This supplies demonstration of what before was intangible and unreal, the Divine verities have become known realities. The soul can now say of God, “I have heard of Thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth Thee” (Job 42:5). He knows that God is holy, for he has been made painfully conscious of the exceeding sinfulness of sin; he *knows* that “the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18), for he has *felt* the same, scorching his own conscience. He knows that He is “the God of all grace,” for he has “*tasted* that the Lord is gracious” (1 Peter 2:3).

Christian experience is the teaching of God in the soul and the effects this produces. Those effects may be, broadly, summed up in two words, *pain* and *pleasure*, sorrow and gladness, mourning and rejoicing. The natural world adumbrates the spiritual: as there is a continual alternation between spring and autumn, summer and winter, so there is in the history of the soul. He who gives rain and sunshine, also sends droughts and biting frosts; likewise does He grant fresh supplies of grace and then withhold the same, and also sends grievous afflictions and sore tribulations. Herein is His high sovereignty conspicuously displayed; as there are some lands which enjoy far more sunshine than others, so some of His elect experience more of joy than sorrow; and as there are parts of the earth where there is far more cold than heat, so there are some of God's children who are called on to suffer more of adversity—both inward and outward—than of prosperity. Unless this be clearly recognized we shall be without the principle key which unlocks the profoundest mysteries of life.

But while there is great diversity in the lot of different Christians, there is an underlying unity. In incidentals there is infinite variety, but in fundamentals there is a real agreement. This may be illustrated by the analogy furnished from the members and groups of the human family. What differences of form, feature, and complexion, distinguishes individuals one from another! Where, out of all mankind, can we find two persons precisely alike? Nevertheless, how much greater is their resemblance than their dissimilarity. Take any man, black or white, red or yellow, and then place him by the side of a horse or cow, and it at once appears that an impassable gulf separates the lowest man from the highest animal. Yet of any two men, taken at random from the remotest nationalities, and their greatest contrast is but as nothing when compared to their general resemblance. The differences are but superficial and on the surface.

Let us now apply the above illustration to the spiritual family of God. Here too there are many variations, yet an underlying oneness; differences of specie, yet but a single genus. Each of the twelve tribes of Israel had its distinctive individuality, yet they formed a single nation. Peter was quite different from Nathanael, and Thomas from John, yet they were equally dear to Christ and equally gave proof they belonged to Him. The differences are patent because they lie on the surface, as freckles and wrinkles are seen on the face; whereas bones and muscles, arteries and nerves—the real stamina of the body—are unseen. Some believers have more faith than others, some more courage, some more gentleness. Some believers have a lighter burden to carry. Allowance must be made for temperament, heredity, environment, privileges, etc.;

yet notwithstanding, all have the same cast of spiritual features, speak the same language, evidence the same stock, and stand out as distinct from the unregenerate as men differ from beasts.

“We must not make the experience of others, in *all* respects, a rule to ourselves, nor our own a rule to others; yet these are common mistakes. Though all are exercised at times, yet some pass through the voyage of life much more smoothly than others” (John Newton). Excellent counsel is contained in those words, and some of God's dear children would be spared many an heartache if they would but heed it. There are some who know the very hour and place where they were first converted, but there are others who cannot even single out the year when their hearts were first really turned to the Lord, and because they cannot, they grieve, and doubt the reality of their conversion. This is very silly, for God does not deal with all of His people in the manner he dealt with the dying thief and Saul of Tarsus. Moreover, the genuineness of conversion is not to be determined by its suddenness or drastic character, but rather by *its lasting effects and fruits*.

“The wind bloweth where it listeth . . . so is every one that is born of the Spirit” (John 3:8). The figure which Christ there employed is very suggestive. Sometimes the wind blows so softly it is almost imperceptible; at other times it comes with hurricane velocity and power. It is so in connection with the new birth. In some cases there is long travail and much hard labour, in others the deliverance is speedy and easy. There is no uniformity in the natural realm; nor is there in the spiritual. If “order” be Heaven's first law, endless variety and diversity is surely its second. As we have said above, considerable allowance must be made (in our calculation and consideration) of what is termed the “accidentals” of life, though of course there are no accidents in a world where everything has; been ordained by God. Those reared in a godly home, and who have sat under sound preaching from earliest days, can hardly expect the Spirit's application of the Word to produce so drastic a *conscious* change as those who were comparative strangers of the Truth when God first meets with them.

The same thing is true of the experiences which *follow* conversion. Some long retain their newborn peace and joy, while others quickly come under a cloud and are shut up for years in “doubting castle.” It is often due to the lopsided and deficient teaching they sit under, for there are some preachers who, if they do not plainly say so, at least convey the impression that it is sinful for any one to be joyful in this world. There is a class of spiritual dyspeptics who are never happy unless they are miserable, and the influence of such is very chilling upon those who are still enjoying their “first love.” But more generally the blame for losing his assurance lies at the young convert's *own door*: failure to separate from worldly companions will grieve the Spirit and cause Him to withhold His witness; while neglect of private prayer and daily feeding on the Word will give the Enemy an advantage which he will be quick to seize.

But even where there *is* a complete break from ungodly companions, and where the means of grace *are* diligently used, the joy of conversion is usually short-lived. Nor is this surprising: deeper discoveries of our depravity must sober those with the most exuberant spirits, and cause groans to mingle with their songs. At conversion sin is only stunned, and not killed, and sooner or later it revives and seeks to recover its lost ground, and gain complete mastery again over the heart. This presents a painful problem to the babe in Christ, for unless he has been previously instructed, he naturally thought he was completely done with sin when he gave himself to the Lord. It was his sincere and deep desire to henceforth live a holy life,

and the sight he now obtains of his corruptions, his weakness in the face of temptations, the sad falls he encounters, awaken serious doubts in his heart, and Satan promptly assures him that he has been deceived, that his conversion was not a genuine one after all.

It is at this stage that the distressed and fearing young saint is in need of real help. Alas, only too often he is hindered and stumbles. Some will laugh at his fears and say “to the winds with your doubts.” The absurdity of such a course may be exposed by drawing an analogy. What good would it do to jeer at one who has a splitting headache or a raging toothache? Would it afford him any relief to say, You are foolish to harbour the thought that all is not well with you? Or to tell the poor sufferer that he is simply heeding the Devil's suggestions? “Physicians of no value” are all such Job's comforters. They do not understand the malady, nor can they prescribe the remedy; and if we yield ourselves to *their* guidance, being blind themselves, they can but lead us into “the ditch.” Beware, my reader, of those who mock at souls in despair.

“Go through, go through the gates; prepare ye the way of the people; cast up, cast up the highway; gather out the stones; lift up a standard for the people” (Isa. 62:10). This word to God's servant is most pertinent to the case we are now considering. To “gather out the stones” from the path of experience of a tried saint is as much a part of the minister's work as it is for him to “lift up a standard.” Now that which is stumbling our young convert is the discovery of his ( unsuspected ) inward corruptions, the power which sin still has over him, and the fact that earnest prayer seems to produce no change for the better. Only one who has himself known these stumbling stones in his own soul is qualified to take them out of the way of others; in fact the preacher knows nothing in reality of any branch of the Truth, except as he has felt its necessity, suitability and power in his own experience. We must ourselves be helped of God before we can be of service to His needy people.

It is the preacher's business to point out that corruptions are no evidence of grace, yet that grace manifests corruptions, causes its recipient to strive against them, and groan beneath them. The sighs of a wounded spirit, the cries for deliverance from the ragings of indwelling sin, the sinkings of soul amidst the turbulent waves of depravity, are evidences of spiritual life, and he who sneers at such is a Pharisee, despises a poor publican. Many of God's people are greatly harassed with temptations, frequently buffeted by Satan, and deeply exercised over the workings of sin in their hearts; and for them to learn that this is the common experience of the regenerate strengthens their hope and moves them to renew their struggles against their spiritual foes. It means much to a sorely tried and deeply perplexed Christian to learn that his minister is “*also his brother and companion in tribulation*” (Rev. 1:9).

Much wisdom and grace are needed here if the preacher is to be both faithful and helpful. On the one hand, he must not lower God's standard to his own poor attainments, nor must he give any countenance to failure. Sin in the believer is as vile in God's sight as sin in the unbeliever, and the allowance of it doubly reprehensible, for in the case of a believer it is against more light, fuller knowledge, greater privilege, deeper obligations. Unbelief is not to be pitied, doubtings are not to be condoned, falls are not to be excused. Sin must be frankly confessed to God, failures penitently acknowledged, all that is of the flesh condemned by us. On the other hand, the minister must be much on his guard lest by unnecessary roughness the bruised reed be broken and the smoking flax be quenched. Feeble knees are to be

strengthened and not ignored, and the hands which hang down are to be lifted up. Patience, too, must be exercised, for as old heads do not grow on young shoulders, neither are raw recruits as well versed in spiritual warfare as the veterans of Christ's army.

There are some godly ministers who have failed to express themselves consistently with their own actual experience and with that of other holy persons, and thereby the faith and hope of gracious souls are weakened and dismayed, and occasion is given unto unbelief to more completely prevail over them. Perhaps some ministers are fearful that if they speak too plainly and freely about *their own* failures and falls, the impression will be conveyed that Divine grace is an empty expression, rather than a powerful deterrent to sin. But such a fear is quite needless: surely none should hesitate to be as frank as was the Apostle Paul in Romans 7—and none was more jealous of the glory of Divine grace than he! But we suspect that in some instances it is *pride* which dominates, causing the preacher to be ashamed of acknowledging his own vileness, fearful lest his people will cease to look up to him as a spiritual giant.

Here too these are two extremes to be guarded against; whilst we are far from advocating that the preacher should make it a practice of referring to his own spiritual ups and downs in every sermon, yet we are convinced that he has failed in discharging an important branch of his duty if he never makes reference to his own experiences. The servant of God is not only a herald, but *a witness* as well, and how can he feelingly *testify* to the longsuffering of God, unless he affirms that He has exercised infinite patience to such a wretch as *himself*? In like manner, he should bear personal witness to the ceaseless conflict between the two natures in the regenerate, the ragings of sin against grace, the surgings of unbelief against faith, the eclipses of hope by doubtings. True, this should always be done in a spirit of humiliation and self-loathing, never minimizing the sinfulness of sin, and still less glorying in his “putrefying sores.”

There should be a balance preserved between describing how a Christian *ought* to live and how the Christian *does* live—how far short the falls of measuring up to the standard which God has set before him, that “in *many* things we offend *all*” (James 3:2). There should also be a balance preserved between the reproving of failure and a setting forth of the gracious provisions which God has made for the meeting of the same. There must be no hesitation in proclaiming *the sufficiency of Christ* to deal with the most desperate cases, His compassion for the most wretched sufferers, His readiness to hear the feeblest cry which goes up from a penitent heart. The groaning saint is to be exhorted unto cultivating the freest possible dealings with the Friend of publicans and sinners, and assured that He is as ready and willing to minister unto the needy now as when He tabernacled here on earth, for He is “the same yesterday and today and forever” and “His compassions fail not.”

As the young convert, distressed by the discovery of the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of his heart, is to be informed that *that* is no proof he is still unregenerate, so he is to be told that the ragings of sin within him are no occasion why he should turn away from the Throne of Grace, but rather a reason why he should go boldly thereto, that he may “obtain *mercy*.” While he is to be frequently exhorted unto keeping his heart with all diligence, and the necessity, importance, and method thereof explained to him, he is also to be warned that his most diligent efforts therein will meet with very imperfect success. He is to be instructed that the spiritual warfare to which God has called him, the good fight of faith in which he is to be daily engaged, is a lifelong task, and that *sincerity and faithfulness* therein, rather than victory, is

what God requires. The wounds which he receives in this warfare are so many reasons for him to constantly have recourse to the Great Physician.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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July, 1937

### **Internal Salvation.**

“Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phil. 1:6). These words set forth a fundamental aspect of salvation that is now widely ignored, and it is one of the vital points at which the pulpit needs testing, for if it be faulty *here*, then its trumpet gives forth an uncertain sound. Alas, most of the pulpits today are engaged in declaring what man must do: creature performances are the sum and substance of the great majority of modern sermons, the operations of God being relegated to the rear. True, there are those who have quite a little to say of what God has done *for* sinners, yet most of these men are radically defective in their conceptions of what has to be wrought *in* sinners before there can be any salvation for them. These men talk much about the “finished work of *Christ*,” and many are misled by them, for they are largely, if not wholly, silent upon the regenerating work of *the Holy Spirit*.

How few there are today who perceive that the regenerating and sanctifying work of the Spirit is as indispensable as is the sacrificial work of Christ. That is why we often hear untaught evangelists say, and read in the “tracts” of our day, “salvation is by the blood of Christ *alone*,” or “we are saved by faith alone”: statements which are unscriptural, most misleading, and highly dangerous because of their lopsidedness. A man may hold the most Scriptural views of the Atonement, and though that may evidence his “orthodoxy,” yet it is no proof at all that he is a new creature in Christ. He may highly honour faith and vehemently affirm that good works have no part or place in the saving of the soul, and yet be alienated from God. Unless the Holy Spirit has “begun a good work *in me*” then I am still dead in sins!

“He which hath begun a good work *in you*.” Ah, *that* is what draws the line of demarcation between the living and the dead: that is what distinguishes true possessor from empty professors. And why? because that “good work” is not in any of us by nature. That statement calls for a word or explanation and amplification. There still remains in fallen man the remnants of that “likeness” or “similitude of God” in which he was originally created, as is clear from James 3:9. The Apostle Paul hesitated not to declare that even the heathen “show the work of the Law written in their heart” (Rom. 2:15). The most depraved and wicked possess a conscience, which is “the candle of the Lord” (Prov. 20:27) within them. Nevertheless, the unregenerate are utterly devoid of even a “spark” of Divine life in them, and therefore is it said of them, “There is none that doeth good, no not one” (Rom. 3:12).

For our first main division we will consider *the nature* or character of this “good work” of which the Holy Spirit is the Agent. Under this head our text suggests four lines of thought. First, it is a *Divine* work: “*He* which hath begun a good work in you.” The Author of it is God, and not man. The creature contributes nothing whatever to it. The favoured subject thereof is entirely passive in it: “So then it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy” (Rom. 9:16). This “good work” is a creative act on the part of God, and to talk of the creature “cooperating” with the Creator in connection with *creation*, is the language of imbecility. I was no more consulted about and had no more to do with my spiritual birth than I had with my natural. Nor does the preacher have any more hand in the resurrection of the soul (which is what this good work is) than he will have in the resurrection of the body. God, and God alone, is the Author of it.

Second, it is as yet an *incomplete* work: “He which hath *begun* a good work in you.” This Divine miracle of grace is carried forward from stage to stage: “first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear” (Mark 4:28). It is commenced at regeneration, it is continued by sanctification, it is consummated at glorification. It is highly important that the Christian should clearly grasp this fact: God has not finished with him yet. We are impatient creatures, and wish to fly before our wings are grown. Many of our expectations are as unwarrantable as they are unattainable. It is but the initial work that God has wrought in the believer, and it remains uncompleted throughout this life. Then let us not look for that in us or from us which will be realized only in Heaven. Sinless perfection in this world is a madman's delusion.

Third, it is an *internal* work: “He which hath begun a good work *in you*.” This is the vital, necessary, indispensable sequel to what Christ did for them. The atoning sacrifice of the Lord Jesus avails them not until they exercise faith in it, and that is impossible so long as a person be dead in trespasses and sins. He must be born again before he can savingly believe and obtain forgiveness from God. The “good work,” then, is wrought in *the heart*. It is no mere making clean the outside of the platter, while the inside be left all foul and filthy. A radical change is effected by the supernatural operations of God. A principle of spiritual life, a new nature is imparted, an “incorruptible seed” is placed within the soul, which radically affects all its faculties—the understanding, conscience, affections, and will.

Fourth, it is a *sovereign* work: “He which hath begun a good work in *you*”—it is not performed in all the members of Adam's race. And why? Because God disburses His charity and distributes His gifts according to the good pleasure of His own will. This “good work” is wrought in none but “God's elect.” Nor is it

wrought in them because they are any better or worthier than the non-elect, for they are not so. There was nothing whatever in them to induce God to perform a miracle of grace in their hearts. It was not because they desired or prayed for it, for “there is none that seeketh after God” (Rom. 3:11). If it be asked *why* God favours them rather than others, the only answer forthcoming is, “Even so Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. 11:26).

For our second main division we will consider *the evidences* of this “good work.” The great question which exercises every quickened soul is, Has this “good work” begun in *me*? This is a matter which causes him the deepest possible concern, far more so than anything connected with his temporal interests. All other considerations fade into utter insignificance before this momentous inquiry: Has a miracle of grace been wrought in *my* soul? Is it possible for me to be *sure*? Many answer, No, declaring that this is a profound mystery which it is impossible for any man to elucidate, insisting that assurance is but proud presumption. But God's Word declares, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Rom. 8:16): against that Divine declaration all human objections are worthless.

Again, we read in the Word of Truth, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life” (1 John 5:13): therefore assurance is both possible and desirable. In view of these passages it is clear that we *may* ascertain whether or not this good work has been wrought in us. But how? By *its effects*. Recall for a moment the nature of this “good work.” It is *Divine*: therefore it must be far above anything the creature can produce. Yet it is *incomplete*: therefore we must not look for something already completed. It is *internal*: therefore it is within—we must look if we are to identify it. This good work is wrought by the Holy Spirit in the heart: it is something which He imparts and produces there, and it is discoverable by the effects which the change makes *there*.

In developing this point we will endeavour to be very plain and simple. First, *a harrowed heart* is an inevitable effect of the Spirit's good work. By nature the heart of fallen man is as hard as sun-baked ground after a long drought. Its possessor is quite unconcerned about his eternal destiny, utterly indifferent whether God's smile or God's frown be upon him: thoroughly in love with sin, he is a total stranger to any grief occasioned by having displeased and dishonoured the Most High. But when a work of Divine grace is begun in him, all this is changed. It is like plentiful showers of rain falling upon and moistening the earth. His heart is softened and chastened. In consequence, he is deeply exercised as to his eternal destiny, greatly troubled over his past carelessness and wickedness, fearful that he has so sinned away his day of grace that he is beyond the reach of mercy. His heart is sore wounded at the realization he has offended so grievously against God.

Second, an *honest heart* is a sure proof that this good work has begun in him. “That on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it” (Luke 8:15)—this is what distinguishes them from the barren-ground believers. But note well the *order*: the heart must be made “honest” before it can rightly be designated “good.” An honest heart is indeed a rare and wonderful thing. By nature our hearts are thoroughly deceitful and hypocritical: that is why we love to be flattered and fish for compliments; that is why when the preacher is conscious of having failed, he is most anxious to be told his sermon was an excellent one; that is why we are pleased when the photographer conceals our defects. Now that streak of deceitfulness is not removed at regeneration, but *a principle of honesty* is imparted.

Ah, that is the very thing I am exercised about, for who knows better than myself how two-faced I am! If I am to be weighed against the balance of genuine honesty, I am certain to be “found wanting.” Not so fast, dear friend. Let me point out how you may discover whether this principle of honesty be in you. If it is, then you are greatly afraid of being deceived in soul matters, and you earnestly beg God to search you and show you your actual state. One with an honest heart desires to know *the worst* about himself! Measure yourself by *that* criterion: no unregenerate person can survive it, for he is determined to think well of himself, no matter what evidence there be to the contrary. One with an honest heart cries to the Lord, “If I am mistaken in supposing I am born again, reveal it to me; if I am deluded by Satan, open mine eyes before it be too late.” No one who *lacks* an honest heart will ever sincerely pray thus!

Third, *a holy heart* evidences God's work in us. Ah, you say, that cuts me off entirely, for my heart is most unholy. Nothing you can say to the contrary can alter the fact: I am a spiritual leper, a mass of corruption, polluted at the very core of my being; and to say that such a vile creature as I am possesses a *holy heart* is both a mockery and a lie. Listen: the graces of the Spirit in our hearts are like lovely flowers growing amid rank and stinking weeds. This is the grand miracle of Divine grace, that purity is planted amid impurity, a Christ-like principle is placed in soil that is earthly, sensual, devilish. Nor does that holy principle eradicate or reduce the sin which surrounds it; nay, the one in whom it dwells frequently has occasion to cry “iniquities prevail against me” (Psa. 65:3). But neither the presence nor the power of indwelling sin is any disproof of a principle of holiness in the heart.

That principle is evidenced by *loathing* the filth that surrounds it, and grieving because of inability to exterminate it. Again, that principle of holiness in the soul may be distinguished thus: a holy God is *delighted in*. You dare not say you delight in God? But do you not admire and adore His character? Do you not perceive and own His attributes are perfect? Do you not crave after and seek unto communion with Him? The unregenerate do not! that is the last thing *they* want! Are not your most joyous moments those which are spent in fellowship with God—a brief foretaste of Heaven? Do you not long to be conformed to His image? These are some of the certain marks of a principle of holiness in the heart, none of which are the products of mere nature, nor can they be attributed unto any refinings of the flesh. A work of grace must be wrought before the heart desires, seeks after, delights in God.

Fourth, *an humble heart* is another sure evidence of the “good work” having been performed in it. Necessarily so, for nothing is more characteristic of fallen man than self-complacency and self-satisfaction. If, then, a person genuinely loathes himself, if he frankly acknowledges his very righteousnesses are as filthy rags, then a miracle of grace must have been wrought within him. Yes, says the dubious reader, I freely endorse the truth of that, yet I certainly dare not lay claim to possessing an *humble* heart. How can I when fully conscious of the fact that I am so often filled with pride? Why, I am such a conceited creature that I take credit for the faithful discharge of duties, and pat myself on the back when I have had liberty at prayer. Even if I be chastened for a season, I congratulate myself on my growing humility. No, my heart is very far from being a lowly one.

Let it be pointed out, then, that the presence of spiritual humility does not destroy or even refine natural pride. No, not in that direction must we look for proofs of its existence. Where, then? Here: if regenerated you dare not, you cannot, you could not make yourself get alone with God and *boast before Him*. Yet the

Pharisee does (Luke 18:11)! Then *you* are *not* a Pharisee, dear friend. When before God, you disown all worthiness of your own, and cast yourself upon His bare *grace*. Do you? yes; then that proves there *is* a principle of true humility in your heart. Are you not thoroughly convinced that if ever you be justified it must be by and because of the righteousness of Christ, and *that alone*? But no self-righteous person will allow that. Are you not deeply distressed over the workings of pride in your heart? You would not be so if there were no spiritual principle of humility in you. No unregenerate person ever grieves over the swellings of self-complacency.

“There is in some weaker Christians, I do not know well what name to call it by, it is an over modesty, a thinking and speaking over meanly of themselves; and which they affect to do, and carry things to too great a length very much this way, as if they had no faith, nor love, and scarce any hope; and are ready to express themselves in such sort as seems to border, at least, upon a denial of the work of grace upon their souls; and is like a tearing up by the roots, as much as in them lies, the very principles of grace in them; which should *never be encouraged*, but discountenanced; the least measure of grace should be *owned*, and men should be thankful for it, and pray for an increase of it” (John Gill). It is because of this we have spoken so plainly and frankly above, trusting that it may please God to bless the same unto the establishing of some of His trembling little ones.

Now, dear reader, we have sought to show that the “good work” which the Spirit has begun in those whom He has brought from death unto life may be discovered *by the effects* which it produces upon its favoured subjects. Those effects we have summed up in a harrowed, honest, holy, and humble heart. These are the sure indexes, the marks, the infallible criteria by which we may *identify* the Spirit's miracle of grace. Such lovely graces are not the native product of earth's human soil; no, they come down from above and are planted in the soul at regeneration.

We have not left ourselves much space for the third main division, to consider *the completion* of this good work: “He which hath begun a good work in you *will finish it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” One of the things which occasion most concern unto those who have a little assurance is that the work of Divine grace within them is making such small progress, nay, it often seems, none at all; that there is no growth in grace, no fruitfulness. To those who mourn over this, the above is indeed a precious promise. First, it is an absolute and unconditional one; there are no provisos or stipulations attached to it. The good work proceeds as it began—altogether apart from creature worthiness or creature efforts. And, we may add, its continuation, like its beginning, is perceivably only by the *effects* which are produced.

Second, it is a promise made good by pure grace—notwithstanding innumerable failures and sins. In himself, the believer is just as unworthy at the close of his pilgrimage as he was when the good work was begun in him. It is *all of grace* from first to last. Third, this promise is one which issues from the eternal and immutable love of God, which is solemnly pledged in the Everlasting Covenant and guaranteed by the infinitely meritorious work of Christ. Fourth, this promise is secured by Divine omnipotence; despite indwelling sin, a hostile world, an opposing Devil, “Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you *will perform it* until the day of Jesus Christ.” O what thanks and praise are due unto Him who enables the believer to say, “The LORD *will perfect* that which concerneth me: Thy mercy, O LORD, endureth forever” (Psa. 138:8).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

July, 1937

### **Experimental Preaching.**

The mere *quoting* of Scripture in the pulpit is not sufficient—people can become familiar with the letter of the Word by reading it at home; it is the *expounding* of it which is so much needed today. “And Paul, as his manner was . . . reasoned with them out of the Scriptures, *opening* and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Acts 17:2, 3). But to “open” the Scriptures helpfully to the saints requires more than a young man who has had a few months' training in some “Bible Institute” or a year or two in a theological seminary. None but those who have been personally taught of God in the hard school of experience are qualified to *so* “open” up the Word that Divine light has cast upon the perplexing experiences of the believer, for while Scripture interprets experience, experience is often the best interpreter of Scripture. “The *heart* of the wise *teacheth* his mouth, and addeth learning to his lips” (Prov. 16:23), and *that* “learning” cannot be acquired in any of man's schools.

As an example of what we have just referred to above, what would be the use of quoting, what benefit would be derived from simply hearing the words of such a passage as this?: “Give ye ear, and hear My voice; hearken, and hear My speech. Doth the plowman plow all day to sow? doth he open and break the clods of his ground? When he hath made plain the face thereof, doth he not cast abroad the fitches, and scatter the cummin, and cast in the principal wheat and the appointed barley and the rye in their place? For his God doth *instruct him to discretion*, and doth teach him. For the fitches are not threshed with a threshing instrument, neither is a cart wheel turned about upon the cummin; but the fitches are beaten out with a staff, and the cummin with a rod. Bread corn is bruised; because he will not ever be threshing it, nor

break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working” (Isa. 28:23-29). Where are the preachers today endowed with wisdom from on High to “open” a Scripture like this one?

Obviously, the above passage is a parable: that which obtains in the natural world is made a similitude of what pertains to the spiritual realm. God's Church upon earth is His “husbandry” (1 Cor. 3:9). The subordinate “husbandmen” are His ministers, who, instrumentally, break up the fallow ground of the hearts of His people. As the farmer *varies* his work as occasion requires, plowing, sowing, reaping, threshing, as the need arises, so the ministerial husbandman does likewise. The “seed” is the Word of God (Luke 8:11), and as God gives wisdom to the farmer to sow “wheat” or “barley” or “rye”—according as the soil be clayey, loamy, or sandy, so He teaches His ministers to preach according to the condition of the hearts of His people. Painful afflictions, both inward and outward, are God's “threshing” instruments, to loosen from the world, to separate the wheat from the chaff in our souls, to fit us for His garner.

Now there are two ways of learning of Divine things—true alike for the preacher and hearer: the one is to acquire a letter knowledge of them from the Bible, the other is to be given an actual experience of them in the soul under the Spirit's teaching. So many today suppose that by spending a few minutes on a good concordance they can discover what humility is, that by studying certain passages of Scriptures they may obtain an increase of faith, or that by reading and re-reading a certain chapter they may secure more love. But that is not the way those graces are experimentally developed. Humility is learned by a daily smarting under the plague of the heart, and having its innumerable abominations exposed to our view. Repentance is learned by feeling the load of guilt and the heavy burden of conscious defilement bowing down the soul. Faith is learned by increasing discoveries of unbelief and infidelity. Love is learned by a personal sense of the undeserved goodness of God to the vilest of the vile.

It is thus with all the spiritual graces of the Christian. Patience cannot be learned from books: it is acquired in the furnace of affliction! “We glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope” (Rom. 5:3, 4). Ah, my reader, we beg the Lord *to* teach us, but the fact is that we do not like His *method* of teaching us. Fiery trials, storms of persecution, the dashing of our carnal hopes, are indeed painful to flesh and blood; yet it is by them that the spirit is purged. We say that we wish to live to God's glory, but fail to remember that we can do so only as self is denied and the Cross be taken up. The crossing of our wills and the thwarting of our plans stirs up the enmity of the carnal mind, yet that makes way for our taking a lower place before God. God's ways of teaching His children are, like all His ways, entirely different from ours.

“I asked the Lord that I might grow in faith and love, and every grace; might more of His salvation know, and seek more earnestly His face. 'Twas He who taught me thus to pray, and He, I trust, has answered prayer; but it has been in such a way as almost drove me to despair. I hoped that in some favoured hour at once He'd answer my request, and by His love's constraining power subdue my will and give me rest. Instead of this, He made me feel the hidden evils of my heart; and let the angry powers of Hell assault my soul in every part. Yea, more, with His own hand He seemed intent to aggravate my woe; crossed all the fair designs I schemed; blasted my gourd, and laid me low. Lord, why is this? I, trembling, cried, wilt Thou pursue Thy worm to death? 'Tis in this way, the Lord replied, I answer prayer for grace and faith.

These inward trials I employ from self and pride to set thee free, and break thy schemes of earthly joy, that thou mayest see thy all *in Me*" (John Newton). These lines (by the author of "How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds in a Believer's Ear") may not suit the sentiments of a few of our readers, but we are sure they accurately express the actual experience of many of God's people.

The more we really grow in grace the more tender becomes the conscience, the more conscious we are of our corruptions, and the more distressing is the hiding of the Lord's countenance. The brighter the sun's shining into a room, the more apparent becomes any dust or cobwebs in it; and the greater the illumination granted by the Holy Spirit, the more will the filth of our hearts be manifested. So too when the Word of God is accompanied with life and power to the soul, it pierces "even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit" (Heb. 4:12): that is, there is a separating between the wheat and the chaff, a dividing between what *God* has wrought and that which is merely *natural* religion. But an honest soul loves a searching ministry, even though it cuts him to the quick. He does not want to be soothed in his sins, and he dreads a false peace. His earnest prayer is "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts" (Psa. 139:23).

The more God searches us the more will He bring to light the "hidden things of darkness," and the more will we be made to loathe ourselves. As the conscience becomes more tender it increasingly *feels* the enormity of sin, and correspondingly grieves over the same. Then it is that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness" (Prov. 14:10), and like Hannah we become "of a sorrowful spirit" (1 Sam 1:15). And then it is, very often, that the Job's comforters of our day add to the grief of the groaning saint. They *unseasonably* prate to him of "the joy of the Lord," and tell him he should commend Christianity by a glowing countenance and a cheerful demeanour. Well may we remind such meddlers into matters they understand not of those words, "As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to an heavy heart" (Prov. 25:20). My reader, God does not require us to play the part of hypocrites before others, nor to mock Him by singing when our hearts are full of heaviness.

It is not only the workings of indwelling sin which occasion the honest-hearted so much distress, but also *the feebleness of their graces*—yea, as it often seems, the total absence of them. The weakness and fickleness of his faith occasions the true Christian much exercise of heart. He knows that God is worthy of his fullest confidence, that His Word is inerrant and His promises sure; and it is a painful trial to him that he fails so sadly to trust Him more fully and count upon His covenant faithfulness more constantly. Herein his experience is quite different from that of the empty professor. That *natural* "faith," which stands only in the wisdom of men, knows no such fluctuations, ebbings and flowings, risings and sinkings, as those which characterize the faith which is of "the operation of God" (Col. 2:12). God is very jealous of His glory, and makes us realize that what He has given can only be exercised by *His* enabling. It is not within the Christian's power to call forth his faith into action when he has a mind to. In this, as in all things, God keeps us entirely dependent upon Himself.

The all-important matter in connection with faith is not the quantity, but the quality of it. An intellectual assent to the Divine Authorship and veracity of the Scriptures produces no spiritual fruits. A faith which is assured of the historicity of Christ, like it is of that of Augustus Caesar or Napoleon, is no evidence of regeneration. A faith which "could remove mountains and have not love" (1 Cor. 13:2) is worthless. It is

because of this that an honest heart is so deeply exercised as to whether or not *his* faith be the “faith of God’s elect” (Titus 1:1), or whether it be merely a product of the flesh; and the very fact that he is so often conscious that he has no faith at all in exercise, causes him to think the worst of himself. At this point, too, he stands in real need of definite help from the pulpit. Then let him be informed that a mere assent to the letter of Truth never yet melted the soul into godly sorrow for sin. If any of our readers have a “faith” which is *not* dampened and chilled by the ragings of indwelling sin, they are welcome to it.

“Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out” (Song. 4:16). This prayer of the Church’s plainly intimates the acknowledgement of her own *helplessness*. It is the believer supplicating the Spirit (under the emblem of the “wind,” cf. John 3:18) for His awakening and reviving influences. He begs Him to operate upon his “garden,” that is, his soul, in order that “the spices thereof,” which are a figure of his spiritual graces, may “flow forth.” He realizes that only as the “north wind” blows, i.e., the Spirit chills his lusts and nips his corruptions, only as He, in power, rebukes his faults and reproves his failings, that he will tread more softly before God. He realizes that only as the “south wind” blows, i.e., as the Spirit breathes upon his soul and warms his graces, that faith, hope, love, patience, meekness, humility, will become active and fruitful.

“Lord, all *my desire* is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee” (Psa. 38:9). “Desire” signifies the longing, yearning, panting of a renewed heart. That soul ardently wishes to be right with God, to have a heart that is cleansed from the love and filth of sin, to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man, to be conformed to the image of Christ, to be in complete subjection to Him, to be fruitful unto His praise. Ah, but such a “desire” is only very imperfectly realized in this life, and that causes disappointment and grief, hence the Psalmist added “and *my groaning* is not hid from Thee.” There is the “groaning” which the wounds of sin occasion, the groanings from the ceaseless conflict between the flesh and spirit, the groanings caused by Satan’s buffetings. And there is also the “groanings” over unrealized longings, unaccomplished ideals, unsatisfied attainments.

Ah, my reader, it is one thing to read in Scripture “For to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Rom. 7:18), and quite another to have a personal corroboration of the same. But that is how God teaches His people, giving them an experimental acquaintance with the Truth, that they may “set to their seal that He is true.” It is one thing to receive as an “article of faith” that not only the unregenerate, but the regenerate also, are, in themselves, impotent unto holiness, but it is quite another to discover from painful experience—as poor Peter did—that “the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is *weak*” (Matt. 26:41). It is then that we pray in earnest, “*Quicken* us, and we will call upon Thy name” (Psa. 80:18); “*Draw* me, we will run after Thee” (Song. 1:4).

Do you, my reader, find your experience to be a bundle of contradictions: one day heartily thanking God for His mercies, the next day wickedly abusing them? one day fondly cherishing the hope that you have a little spiritual life, the next quite sure that you have none at all? If so, you know something of what it is to be “emptied from vessel to vessel” (Jer. 48:11). But if you do not, if on the contrary, your course is a smooth and easy one, your heart always light and cheerful, there is grave cause to conclude you belong to that class of whom it is said “because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa. 55:19). As we have previously pointed out, Christian experience alternates between pain and pleasure, sorrow and

joy: *pain* arising from a sense of our sinfulness, from manifold temptations, and the hidings of God's face; *pleasure* from a sense of pardon, promises applied by the Spirit, communion with Christ.

It is only by degrees that believers are “established,” and even then that does not prevent them from being severely tried and grievously assaulted by their spiritual enemies. Satan causes many to doubt Christ's willingness to save them, and if they receive a little encouragement from the Word, then he seeks to stir up afresh their corruptions, and renews their fears and doubtings. The most advanced Christian often experiences a sore conflict from his lusts; those who enjoy the most intimate communion with God are frequently attacked by Satan. If the Apostle Paul had to cry out “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Rom. 7:24), we must not be surprised if *we* have cause to do the same. But observe, that his next words were “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 25). Ah, we never value *Christ* more highly than after a season of acute soul distress, as we never prize Divine *grace* so much as when we have been afflicted by indwelling sin. It is a sense of pollution and filth which moves us to turn again to the Fountain open for sin and for uncleanness.

Professing Christians are to be frequently exhorted to diligently examine the work of the Spirit in them, and compare the same with what is recorded of the saints in Scripture. Nor is there, as we have said before, any “legality” in this, for the work of the Spirit proceeds as truly from the everlasting Covenant of Grace as did the work of Christ, and the discovery of His operations enables the believer to “set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33). A lively interest in the things which concern our eternal welfare, a trembling at God's Word and being suitably affected thereby, hatred of sin, loathing of self, a child-like love for the Lord, are some of *the evidences* of God's work in the soul. Let it also be boldly affirmed that God exercises His high sovereignty even in the very *degrees of grace* granted us: if it be true that He endows His servants with talents, some more, some less, it is equally true that He bestows upon the rank and file of His people a different “measure” of His Spirit.

While the minister is to be much on his guard against building up the hope of empty professors, he must ever seek to encourage and comfort the mourners in Zion, urging them to *continue by* “the pool” (the means of grace), waiting for the moving of the waters; assuring them that if they do, sooner or later there will be a breaking in of the light of God's countenance, dispelling the darkness of the mind and melting the hard heart. Remind them of such a promise as, “For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the LORD” (Jer. 30:17). Remind them of the case of Abraham “who against hope believed in hope” (Rom. 4:18). Tell them that though they may have but feeble apprehensions of God's *love*, nevertheless they can thank Him for His *longsufferance* to them.

Let us point out that *doctrinal* preaching also has its place and use in strengthening the experience of saints, and must never be pushed into the background. It is needful not only for instruction, but equally so for those who *have* knowledge of the Truth: “To write *the same* things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe” (Phil. 3:1). Our memories are very fickle; the impressions created by a sermon quickly pass away, so that there must be “line upon line, precept upon precept”: it is the principal *means* used by the Spirit in feeding the soul, strengthening faith, fortifying against Satan. Make *Christ* pre-eminent in all your sermons. Do you, my reader, know something of Joseph Hart's experience when he wrote “I often poured out, in transports of blissful astonishment, 'Lord, 'tis too much, 'tis too much, surely

my soul *was not worth* so great a price!" “

Finally, the Christian must be definitely warned against resting in his *present attainments*. Even though he now be rejoicing in the knowledge of sins forgiven. Press such a verse as “Then shall we know (have assurance), if we *follow on* to know the LORD” (Hosea 6:3): explaining its meaning, enforcing its duty. It is only little by little that the believer learns how to put on his armour and use spiritual weapons against his enemies. A regenerated soul longs to know more of the power of Christ's resurrection, for he so often feels sinking in the deadness of sin, and therefore those branches of Truth best calculated to quicken the heart are also to be oft set before him.

N.B. As example is better than precept, we have sought to prepare an experimental sermon on Philippians 1:6, which immediately follows this article.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1937

### **Christ our Exemplar.**

Two serious mistakes have been made by men in taking or not taking Christ for their example, and it is difficult to determine which is the more evil and fatal of the two. First, there have been those who held up the perfect life of the Lord Jesus before the unconverted and maintained that they must imitate the same in order to find acceptance with God. In other words, they made the emulating of Christ “the way of salvation” unto lost sinners. This is a fundamental error, which cannot be resisted too strenuously. It repudiates the total depravity and spiritual helplessness of fallen men. It denies the imperative necessity for the new birth. It nullifies the Atonement, by emphasizing Christ's flawless life at the expense of His sacrificial death. It substitutes works for faith, creature efforts for Divine grace, man's faulty doings for the Redeemer's finished work. If the Acts and Epistles are searched it will be found that the Apostles never preached the imitating of Christ as the way to obtain forgiveness of sins and secure peace with God.

But in recent generations the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. If a century ago the example which Christ has left His people was made too much of, our moderns make far too little of it. If *they* gave it a place when preaching to the unsaved, which Scripture does not warrant, *we* have sadly failed to press it upon Christians to the extent that Scripture requires. If they are to be blamed for misusing the example of Christ in connection with justification, we are guilty of failing to use it in connection with sanctification. While it is true that the moral perfections which Christ so illustriously displayed during His earthly sojourn are still extolled in many places, yet how rarely one now hears (or reads) of those who insist that the emulating of Christ is absolutely essential for the believer's preservation and ultimate salvation: yea,

would not the great majority of “orthodox” preachers be positively afraid to make any such assertion lest they be charged with “legality”?

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only a perfect and glorious Pattern of all graces, holiness, virtue and obedience, to be preferred above all others—but *He alone* is such. In the lives of the best of the saints, Scripture records that which it is our bounden duty to avoid, as well as that which we ought to follow, so that sometimes one is puzzled to know whether it is safe to conform unto them or not. But God has graciously supplied us with a sure rule which effectually solves that problem and if heeded by us we shall never be at a loss to perceive our duty. The holy men and women of Scripture are to be imitated by us only as far as they were themselves conformed unto *Christ*: see 1 Corinthians 11:1. The best of their graces, the highest of their attainments, the most perfect of their duties were spoiled by spots and blemishes—but in Christ is no imperfection whatever, for He had no sin and did no sin.

Christ is not only the perfect but also the *pattern* Man and therefore is His example suitable for *all* believers. This remarkable fact presents a feature which has not received the attention it deserves. There is nothing so distinctive in personality as racial and national characteristics. The greatest of men bear unmistakable marks of their heredity and environment. Racial peculiarities are imperishable: to the last fiber of his being Luther was German, Knox a Scot; with all his largeness of heart Paul was a Jew. Now in sharp and blessed contrast, Jesus Christ rose above heredity and environment—nothing local, transient, national, or sectarian dwarfed His wondrous personality. Christ is the only truly catholic man. He belongs to *all* ages and is related to *all* men, because He is “the Son of man.” This it is which underlies the *universal suitability* of Christ's example to believers of all nations, who one and all may find in Him the perfect realization of their ideal.

This is indeed a miracle and exhibits a transcendent perfection in the Man Christ Jesus which is rarely pondered. How remarkable it is that the converted Englishman may find in Christ's character and conduct a pattern as well suited to him as to a saved Chinaman! His example is as appropriate for the regenerated Zulu as it is for a born-again German. The needs of Lord Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton were as truly met in Christ as were those of the half-witted youth who said, “I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. But Jesus Christ is my all in all.” How remarkable that the example of Christ is as appropriate for believers of the twentieth century as it was for those of the first, that it is as suitable for a Christian child as for his grandparent! There is nothing effeminate about Christ, yet Christian women can take Him for their example as well as may Christian men. Christ rises above *all* human limitations: He is perfect Man, and therefore is His example perfectly suited to all believers.

He is *appointed* of God for this very purpose. One end why God sent His Son to become flesh and tabernacle in the world therein was that He might set before us an example in our own nature. In Christ is One who was like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted, thereby exhibiting to us of that renewal to His image in us, of that return unto Him from sin and apostasy and of that holy obedience which He requires of us. Such an example was needful that we might never be at a lost about the will of God in His commandments, having a glorious representation of it before our eyes and that could be given us no otherwise than *in our own nature*. The angelic nature was not suited to set us an example of obedience, especially as to the exercise of such graces as we specially stand in need of in this world. What example

could angels set us in themselves of patience in afflictions or quietness in sufferings when *their* nature is *incapable* of such things? Nor could we have had a complete and perfect example in our nature except in One who was holy and “separate from sinners.”

Many are the Scriptures which present Christ as the believer's Exemplar, the principal of which are the following, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29)—Learn by the course of My life as well as by the word of My mouth. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him” (John 10:4)—He requires no more of us than He rendered Himself. “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another *according to Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 15:5). “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2). “But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:20, 21). “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

Example is better than precept. Why? Because a precept is more or less an abstraction, whereas an example sets before us *a concrete presentation* and therefore has more aptitude to incite the mind unto imitation. The conduct of those with whom we are in close association exerts a considerable influence upon us, either for good or evil. That fact is clearly recognized in the Scriptures. For example, we are enjoined, “Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Prov. 22:24, 25). It was for this reason (among others) that God commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, so that they might not learn their evil ways and be contaminated by them (Deut. 7:2-4). Contrariwise, the example of the pious exerts an influence for good: that is why they are called “the salt of the earth.”

Now it is in keeping with this principle that God has appointed the consideration of Christ's character and conduct as *a special means* for the increase of piety in His people, so that as their hearts contemplate His holy obedience, it has a peculiar efficacy unto their growing in grace beyond all other examples. It is in the beholding of the Lord Jesus by faith that salvation comes to us: “*Look* unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa. 45:22). Christ is presented before the sinner in the Gospel, with the promise that whosoever believably looks unto Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:14, 15). This is a special ordinance of God and it is made effectual by the Spirit unto all who believe. In like manner, Christ is presented unto the saints as the grand Pattern of obedience and Example of holiness, with the promise that as they contemplate Him as such we shall be changed into His image: 2 Corinthians 3:18. Our response to that appointment of God is rewarded by a growing in piety.

But to get down to details: *what is involved* and comprised in the saints' imitating of Christ? First, it necessarily presupposes that they be *already regenerate*. The hearts of His followers must be sanctified before their lives can be conformed to Him. The spirit and principle of obedience must be imparted to the soul before there can be an external imitation of Christ's practice. This order is plainly enunciated in, “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their

flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezek. 11:19, 20). One who is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity has not heart for spiritual things: therefore the tree must be made good ere it can produce good fruit. We must first *live* in the Spirit and then *walk* in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). One might as well urge the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots as call upon the unconverted to follow the example which Christ has left His people.

Second, the imitating of Christ definitely denotes that *no Christian may govern himself* or act according to his own will and pleasure. Those who are a rule unto themselves act in fearful defiance of the Most High: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). A man may as well feign to be his own creator as his own guide. No man has wisdom enough to direct himself. When born again we are made conscious of this fact: our proud hearts are then humbled and our rebellious wills broken and we feel the need of being led by Another. The cry of a converted heart is, “Lord, what wouldest Thou have be to do?” and His answer to us today is, Follow the example which I have left you: learn of Me; walk even as I walked.

Third, if this imitating of Christ clearly implies that no man may pretend to be his own master, it is equally evident that no matter how wise or how holy he is, *no Christian has the right* nor is qualified to *rule others*—Christ alone is appointed and fitted to be the Lord of His people. It is true that we read in the Word, “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12), and “*Obey* them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Heb. 13:17), yet that must be taken in subordination to the *example of Christ*. The best of men are but men at the best: they have their errors and their faults and wherein they differ from Christ it is our duty to differ from them. It is very important that we should be quite clear upon this point, for much mischief has resulted from allowing some to deprive others of a vital part of their rightful liberty.

It is not that Scripture teaches an ecclesiastical democracy—that is as far from the Truth as the Romish hierarchy at the opposite extreme. God has placed rulers in the Church and its members are commanded to obey the same; but their rule is administrative and not legislative—to enforce the laws of Christ and not invent rules of their own. Paul affirmed “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2 Cor. 1:24), and Peter declared of the elders or bishops, “Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). Filled with so great a measure of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness as the Apostle Paul was, yet he goes no higher than this: “Be ye followers of me, even as I *also am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Fourth, the imitation of Christ plainly intimates that *true Christianity is very strict and exacting* and in nowise countenances licentiousness or the indulgence of fleshly lusts. This needs emphasising in such a day as ours, when so much looseness and laxity prevail on every hand. People suppose they may be followers of Christ and yet ignore the path which He traversed—that they may decline the unpleasant task of denying self and yet make sure of Heaven. What a delusion! The vital necessity of the careful imitation of Christ utterly disallows all loose walking and rejects the claim of any to being real Christians if they heed not His holy example. Neither worldliness nor self-indulgence can find any protection beneath the

wings of the Gospel. The unvarying rule which is binding upon all who claim to be His is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19)—let him either follow the example of Christ, or cease claiming to belong to Him; let him tread the highway of holiness or all his fair words are worthless.

Fifth, the imitation of Christ necessarily implies *the blemishes of the best of men*. If the life of Christ is our pattern, then the holiest among His followers are obliged to own that they come far short of this standard of duty and that, not in a few details, but *in every respect*. The character and conduct of the Lord Jesus were without spot or blemish and therefore are so high above *our* poor attainments, that we are filled with shame when we measure ourselves thereby. Self-satisfied religionists may take delight in comparing themselves with others, as the Pharisee did with the Publican. And deluded souls who suppose that all Christian holiness consists of its measuring up to some humanly-invented standard of perfection (or entering into some peculiar experience), may pride themselves that they have “received the second blessing” or “have the fullness or baptism of the Spirit”—yet all who honestly measure themselves by the perfections of *Christ* will find abundant cause to be humbled.

This, too, is a point of tremendous practical importance. If I place my handkerchief against a dark background it will appear spotlessly clean but if I lay it upon some newly-fallen snow the imperfection of its whiteness is quickly apparent. So if I compare my own experiences and life with that of certain “holiness” preachers or “victorious-life” advocates, I may rightly conclude that I compare favourably with them; but if I sincerely and diligently apply to myself the line and plummet of *Christ's* example, then I must at once acknowledge that, like Peter of old, I am but following Him “afar off.” Surely none was more proficient in holiness and punctilious in obedience than the Apostle Paul, yet, when he compared himself with Christ, he declared, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I *may* apprehend” (Phil. 3:12).

Sixth, the imitation of Christ as our rule and pattern clearly implies *His transcendent holiness*—that His holiness is high above that of all creatures. Therefore it is the greatest of the Christian's ambitions to be made conformed unto His image (Phil. 3:10). Now Christ has a double perfection: a perfection of *being* and a perfection of *working*. His life here upon earth supplies a perfect rule for us because there was no blot or error therein, for He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” and such an High Priest became us (Heb. 7:26). Thus the conformity of professing Christians unto Christ's example is both the test and measure of all their graces: the nearer anyone approaches to this Pattern, the closer he comes unto perfection.

Finally, the Christian's imitation of Christ, under the penalty of forfeiting his claim to any saving interest in Christ, necessarily denotes that sanctification and obedience are *the evidences of our justification* and acceptance with God. Scriptural assurance is unattainable without sincere and strict obedience. “The work of righteousness (not of loose living) shall be peace” (Isa. 32:17): “we have it not *for* our holiness, but we always have it *in the way* of holiness. Let men talk what they will of the immediate sealings and comforts of the Spirit *without* any regard to holiness, or respect to obedience: sure I am, whatever delusion they meet with in *that* way, true peace and consolation is only to be found and expected here” (John Flavell, to whom we are indebted for quite a little in the above seven points).—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1937

### **Christ Our Exemplar.**

“Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). We have seen that not only is the perfect life of Christ a suitable pattern of holiness for His people to imitate but that God has expressly *appointed* it for that very purpose. This in order that we may have a sure rule to walk by—the Law of God translated into concrete terms and its requirements set before us by a personal representation and also for the purpose of humbling our proud hearts—by revealing to us how far short we come of measuring up to God's standard of righteousness. Furthermore, God has appointed that the example of Christ should be followed by His people in order that His Son might be honoured by them, in order to distinguish His followers from the world and in order that they should evidence the reality of their profession. The imitating of Christ, then, is not optional, but obligatory.

But at this point a very real difficulty confronts those who are sincerely seeking grace to heed this Divine appointment: in what particular respects and details are we to regard Christ as our Exemplar? All things recorded of Him in Holy Writ are for our instruction, but not for our imitation. There were some things which Christ did *as God*, as for example, when He wrought *miracles*: “My Father worketh hitherto, and I work . . . For as the Father raiseth up the dead, and quickeneth them; even so the Son quickeneth whom He will” (John 5:17, 21). “But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Matt. 9:6)—even the Apostles never performed such deeds in their own name or by their own power. Again—*as Mediator*, Christ performed *works of merit*, thereby making expiation for the sins of His people and “bringing in

everlasting righteousness” for them, thus obtaining their justification and reconciliation; so now His intercession secures their preservation. Now no mere man can do anything meritorious, for at best we are all “unprofitable servants.” The Romanists, who are merit-mongers, are grievous offenders here.

Even *as Man*, Christ performed extraordinary acts which are not for our emulation. His fasting for forty days and nights, His walking upon the waters, His spending a whole night in prayer (Luke 6:12)—we do not read in Scripture of anyone else doing so—are cases in point. So, too, He performed certain temporary works which pertained to the time in which He lived, which are not for our imitation: such as His being circumcised, keeping the Passover, etc. Wherein, then, is Christ to be imitated by us? First, in all those *moral duties* which pertain to all men at all times, which are neither extraordinary nor temporary, comprehended in the loving of God with all our hearts and our neighbours as ourselves. Second, in such duties as belong to a *like calling*: as the child obeying its parents (Luke 2:52), the citizen paying his taxes (Matt. 17:27), the minister of the Gospel diligently (Luke 8:1) and faithfully (Heb. 3:2) discharging his office. Third, in all such works as have *like reason* and occasion for the doing of them: Matthew 12:12, John 8:59, etc.

In addition to those three general rules, we may repeat here what we said in our “Sanctification” article. The believer's conformity to Christ corresponds to *the states* through which He passed. The man Christ Jesus first entered a state of humiliation before God rewarded Him by bringing Him into a state of exaltation. And therefore has God ordered that, in this, the members shall resemble their Head: they are called upon to endure suffering before they enter into the promised glory. The disciples of the Lord Jesus have to experience a measure of opposition, persecution, hatred, affliction and they do so for their hope of a better life to come. In that, they do but follow “the Captain of their salvation,” who was “made perfect through sufferings” (Heb. 2:10). Had not God declared, “If we be dead with Him (Christ), we shall also live with Him: if we suffer, we shall also reign with Him” (2 Tim. 2:11, 12)? That order is inescapable: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10).

In like manner, the Christian is to be conformed unto *the special acts of Christ's mediation*, which are His death and resurrection. These are of paramount consideration, for they are not only a pattern proposed to our meditation but they possess a great influence upon our dying to sin and living unto holiness. This is evidenced from the fact that those effects of grace in us are ascribed to those acts of Christ's mediation which carry most correspondence with them. Thus our mortification is ascribed to Christ's crucifixion (Gal. 2:20), our vivification to His rising unto life (Phil. 3:10), and our heavenly-mindedness to His ascension (Phil. 3:20); so that all of those chief acts of Christ are verified in His people. We die *to* sin as Christ died *for our* sins.

But in descending to more specific details, it is in Christ's *graces* we are to be conformed unto Him. All the graces and virtues of the Spirit were represented in their grandest glory and brightest lustre in His life here on earth. First, the purity and *holiness of His life* is proposed as a glorious pattern for the saints to imitate: “Every man that hath this hope in Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:3). Before enlarging upon this let us point out wherein Christ is unique and beyond our imitation. He was *essentially* holy in His being, for He is “the Holy One of God.” He entered this world immaculate, pure from the least

stain of pollution: therefore it was said to His mother: “That holy thing which shall be born of thee” (Luke 1:35). Again—He was *effectually* holy, for He makes others holy, for by His sufferings and blood there is opened a fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). He is also *infinitely* holy, as He is God, and no measure can be set upon His holiness as Mediator, for He received the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). In these particulars He is inimitable.

Notwithstanding the above exceptions, the holiness of Christ is presented as a pattern for us. He was truly and *sincerely* holy, without fiction or pretense. When the prince of this world scrutinized Him he could find no defect in Him (John 14:31). He was pure gold throughout. The Pharisee may pretend to be holy but it is only in outward appearance. Now the Christian's holiness must be genuine, sincere, without simulation. Christ was *uniformly* holy: at one time and place as well as another. The same even tenor of holiness ran through the whole of His life from first to last: so should it be with His followers: “As He which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15). Alas, what inconsistencies we have to bemoan: one part of our life heavenly, another earthly!

Christ was exemplary holy: a pattern to all that came near Him, so that even those sent to arrest Him had to return to their masters and say “never man spake as this Man.” And we are to imitate Him in this respect. The Thessalonian saints were commended because they “were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the Word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to Godwards is spread abroad” (1 Thess. 1:7, 8). Let none go out of your company, Christian reader, without being either convicted or edified. Christ was *strictly* holy: “Which of you convicteth Me of sin?” was His challenge. The most observing and unfriendly eye could pick no flaw in His actions. It is our duty to imitate Christ in this, too: “That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world” (Phil. 2:15).

Second, *the obedience of Christ* to His Father's will is a pattern for the Christian's emulation: “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus . . . (who) became obedient unto death” (Phil. 2:5, 8). Now Christ's obedience was free and *voluntary*, not forced and compulsory. “Then said I, Lo, I come . . . I delight to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:7, 8). Nor did He waver, later, when suffering so grievously in the discharge of that will: “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life” (John 10:17). So the Christian is to follow the steps of Christ, doing nothing grudgingly and counting not God's commands to be grievous. Our *obedience* must be rendered cheerfully if it is to be acceptable. Christ's obedience was unreserved and *entire*, declining no part of His Father's will. See His perfect submission in Gethsemane. Here, too, he has left us an example: we are to do the most unpleasant task which God assigns us. Happy the Christian who can say with the Apostle “for I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus” (Acts 21:13).

The obedience of Christ was *entirely disinterested*. It was wrought for no self ends, but for the glory of God: “I have glorified Thee on the earth: I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). Christ sought not honour of men, but the great desire of His soul was “Father, glorify *Thy* name” (John 12:28). This quality must also characterize our obedience: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Phil. 2:4). The streams of Christ's obedience flowed from the

fountain of *love to God*. “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do” (John 14:31). Let this also be true of us, for loveless obedience is of no value in the sight of God. The obedience of Christ was *constant*, continuing unto His very last breath. A being not weary in well-doing is required of us: “Be thou faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10).

Third, *the self-denial* of Christ is the pattern for the believer: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Though there is to be a resemblance, there can be no exact equivalent. “For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor” (2 Cor. 8:9). Who can gauge what Christ, for the glory of God and the love which He bare to the elect, gave up for us? How utterly trivial in comparison is the greatest sacrifice we are called upon to make! Christ was under *no obligation* whatever to deny Himself for us but He has placed us under the strongest obligations to deny ourselves for His sake. Though under no obligation, He denied Himself *readily*, making no objection to the severest part of it. Then let it not be said of us, “For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's” (Phil. 2:21). Let not self be loved, petted, pitied, pampered and indulged—rather renounce and mortify it, and make the pleasing and glorifying Christ your only business.

Fourth, *the activity and diligence* of Christ in fulfilling the work of God committed unto Him was a pattern for all believers to imitate. It is said of Him that “He went about doing good” (Acts 10:39), and what a glorious work He accomplished in so short a time!—a work which will be celebrated to all eternity by the praises of the redeemed. It was a work upon which His heart was intently set: “*My meat* is to do the will of Him that sent Me.” It was a work under which He never fainted, despite the greatest discouragements and opposition. The very shortness of the time provoked Him to the greatest diligence: “I must work the works of Him that sent Me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4). He improved all opportunities and occasions; granting Nicodemus an interview at night, preaching the Gospel to the woman at the well when He was exhausted from His journey. Nothing displeased Him more than to be dissuaded from His work. “Get thee behind Me, Satan,” He said to Peter when that Apostle said “spare Thyself, Lord.”

Shall His followers, then, trifle their lives away in vanity? Shall we be slothful when He was so diligent? How great an honour God has placed on us by calling us to His service. Steadfastness in the work of obedience is our greatest security in the hour of temptation: “The LORD is with you, while ye be with Him” (2 Chron. 15:2). Diligence in prosecuting holiness is the way to get more: Luke 18:8. Graces grow by being *used*; spiritual acts lead to spiritual habits; talents faithfully employed are rewarded by an increase thereof. Diligence in the work of God is the direct way to an assurance of the love of God: 2 Peter 1:5-10. Diligence in obedience is the greatest security against backsliding: coldness leads to carelessness, carelessness to negligence, negligence to apostasy. The more diligent we are in serving God, the more we become like Christ.

Fifth *the inoffensiveness* of the life of Christ on earth is an excellent pattern for all His people. He injured none, and never gave occasion for any to be justly hurt at Him. He was not only holy, but “harmless.” He waived His own personal rights in order to avoid the giving of offense, as in the case of the tribute money: Matthew 17:27. When He was reviled, He “reviled not again” (1 Peter 2:23). So circumspect was our

Saviour that though His enemies sought occasion against Him, they could not find any: John 19:4. Let us, then, earnestly seek grace that we may imitate this blessed excellency of His life, that we may obey God's command and be "blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke" (Phil. 2:15). The honour of Christ, whose name we bear, is bound up in our deportment. The rule which He has laid upon us is, "Be ye wise as serpents, and harmless as doves."

Sixth, the *humility and meekness* of Christ is proposed by Himself as a pattern for His people's imitation: "learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart" (Matt. 11:29). He abased Himself, by taking upon Him the form of a servant. He stooped to the lowest office, by washing the disciple's feet. When He presented Himself to Israel as their King, it was in humiliation, riding upon the back of an ass: "Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, *meek*, etc." (Matt. 21:5). He declared "the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister" (Matt. 20:28). He condescended to the lowest of men, eating with "publicans and sinners" (Matt. 9:11). In all of this He has left us an example to follow. O to be "clothed with humility" (1 Peter 5:5) and thereby evidence our conformity unto Christ!

Pride has no part of one who professes to be a follower of the Lord Jesus. It not only betrays lack of communion with Christ but woeful ignorance of self. Nothing is so provoking to God and more quickly estranges the soul from Him: "Though the LORD is high, yet hath He respect unto the lowly: but the proud He knoweth afar off" (Psa. 138:6). Pride is not only utterly inconsistent with the complaints we make of our corruptions but it presents a serious stumbling block to the children of God. Be not ambitious of the world's *great ones* but content yourself as one of Christ's *little ones*. Learn humility at His feet. Evidence it in your apparel and deportment: 1 Peter 3:3. Display it in cultivating fellowship with the poorest of the flock: Romans 12:16. Show it by speaking of and comporting yourself as "less than the least of all saints" (Eph. 3:8).

Seventh, the *contentment* of Christ in a low and mean condition in this world is an excellent pattern for His people's imitation. His portion here was a condition of deepest poverty and contempt. The child of lowly parents; born in a manger. So deprived of the comforts of this world that, much of His time, He had nowhere to lay His head. So poor that He had to borrow a penny for the purpose of pointing to its superscription. Yet He never murmured or complained. Nay, so far from it, so perfectly content was He with God's appointments that He declared, "The lines are fallen unto Me in pleasant places" (Psa. 16:6). Under the most degrading and painful sufferings, He never resisted nor repined: "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter" (Isa. 53:7). "O that in this also the poorest Christians would imitate their Saviour, and learn to manage an afflicted condition with a contented spirit: let there be no complaints, or foolish charging of God heard from you, whatever straits or troubles He brings unto you.

"The meanest and most afflicted Christian is owner of many rich, invaluable mercies: Ephesians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 3:23. Is sin pardoned and God reconciled? then never open your mouths any more. You have many precious promises that God will not forsake you in your straits: Hebrews 13:5. Your whole life has been an experience of the faithfulness of God to His promises. How useful and beneficial all your afflictions are to you! they purge your sins, wean you from the world and turn to your salvation; then, how unreasonable must your discontentedness at them be! The time of your relief and full deliverance from all

your troubles is at hand: the time is but short that you shall have any concernment about such things. Your lot falls by *Divine* direction upon you, and bad as it may be, it is much easier and sweeter than the condition of Christ in this world was. Yet He was contented, and why not you?" (John Flavell, to whom we are indebted for much in the above seven points).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1937

### **Christ Despised.**

“He is despised and rejected of men” (Isa. 53:3). For the special benefit of young preachers we propose to sermonize this text, though in as simple and homely a manner as possible, trusting that it may please the Lord to speak through it to some unsaved readers, for we dare not assume that all who take this magazine have really been born again.

Our text forms part of one of the Messianic predictions, in which God made know long beforehand the treatment which his Son should receive when He became incarnate. The prophecy of Isaiah was in the hands of the Jews seven hundred years before the Lord Jesus was born at Bethlehem, yet so exactly did it describe what befell Him that it might well have been written by one of the Apostles. Therein is supplied one of the incontrovertible proofs of the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, for only One who knew the end from the beginning could have thus written history beforehand.

It might well have been supposed that the advent to earth of such an One as the Lord of Glory would meet with a warm welcome and reverent reception, the more so in view of His appearing in human form, going about doing good. Since He came not to judge, but to save; since His mission was one of grace and mercy, since He ministered to the needy and healed the sick, will not men gladly receive Him? Many would naturally think so, but in so thinking they overlook the fact that the Lord Jesus is “the *Holy One*,” and none but those who have in their hearts the principle of holiness can appreciate ineffable Purity. Such an assumption as the one we have just mentioned ignores the solemn fact of *human depravity*: the heart of

fallen man is “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9). How can the Holy One appear attractive to those who are full of sin!?

Nothing so clearly evidences the condition of the human heart, and so solemnly demonstrates its corruption, as its attitude toward the Christ of God. There is much recorded against man in the Old Testament Scriptures, as for example in Psalm 14:1-4; yet dark as is the picture there drawn of fallen human nature, it fades into insignificance before what the New Testament sets before us. “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7), and never was this so frightfully patent as when He was manifested in flesh. “If I had not come,” declared Christ, “and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22). The appearing of Christ has fully exposed man, bringing to light as nothing else ever has the desperate wickedness of his heart. Now let us ask and supply answer to three questions: *Who* was (and still is) “despised and rejected of men?” *Why* is He so grievously slighted? In *what way* is He scorned?

*Who* was so unwelcome here? We answer, first, the One who pressed upon men the absolute *sovereignty of God*. Few things are so distasteful to the proud human heart as the truth that God does as He pleases, without in anywise consulting with the creature; that He dispenses His favours entirely according to His imperial will. Fallen man has no claims upon Him, is destitute of any merit, and can do nothing whatever to win God's esteem. Fallen man is a spiritual pauper, entirely dependent upon Divine charity, and in the bestowal of His mercies God is regulated by naught but His own “good pleasure.” “Is it not lawful for Me to do *what I will* with Mine own?” (Matt. 20:15) is His own unanswerable challenge: yet, as the context there shows, man wickedly murmurs against this.

Now the Lord Jesus came here to glorify His Father, and therefore do we find Him maintaining His crown-rights and emphasising His sovereignty. In His first message, in the Capernaum synagogue, He pointed out that though there were many widows in Israel during the days of Elijah, when there was a great famine throughout all the land, unto none of them was the Prophet sent, save unto one at Zarephath; and that though there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha, none of them were healed, yet distinguishing mercy was shown unto Naaman the Syrian. The sequel was, “All they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were *filled with wrath*, and rose up, and thrust Him out of the city, and led Him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast Him down headlong” (Luke 4:28, 29). For pressing the truth of God's absolute sovereignty, Christ was “despised and rejected of men.”

Who was so unwelcome here? Second, *the One who upheld God's Law*. Therein is the Divine authority expressed, and complete subjection thereto is required from the creature; and therefore did Christ press the demands of God's Law upon man. Said He, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17); “All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets” (Matt. 7:12). But fallen men resent restraints, and want to be a law unto themselves, and their language concerning God and His Christ is “Let us break Their bands asunder, and cast away Their cords from us” (Psa. 2:3). Because the Lord Jesus enforced the requirements of the Decalogue He was “despised and rejected of men.” A solemn illustration of this occurs in John 7. To the Jews He said, “Did not Moses give you the Law, and yet none of you keepeth the Law? Why go ye about to kill Me?” (v. 19). And what was their response? This, “The people

answered and said, Thou hast a devil” (v. 20).

Who was so unwelcome here? Third, the One who *denounced human tradition* in the religious sphere. Despite the Fall, man is essentially a religious creature—the image of God in which he was originally created has not been completely destroyed. The world over, blacks and whites, reds and yellows, pay homage to gods of their own devising, and there are few things on which they are more tender than their sacerdotal superstitions: he who condemns or even criticizes the devotees of any form or order of worship, will be greatly disliked. Now Christ drew upon Himself the hatred of Israel's leaders by His denunciation of their inventions. He charged them with “making the Word of God of none effect through your tradition” (Mark 7:13). When He cleansed the temple, the chief priests and scribes were “sore displeased” (Matt. 21:15).

Who was so unwelcome here? Fourth, the One who *repudiated an empty profession*. Nothing so infuriated the Jews as Christ's exposure and denunciation of their vain pretensions. Being omniscient, it was impossible to impose upon Him; being inflexibly righteous, He could not accept deceptions; being absolutely holy, He must insist upon sincerity and reality. When they declared “Abraham is our father,” He answered, “If ye were Abraham's children, ye would do the *works* of Abraham.” When they added “we have one Father, even God,” He replied, “If God were your Father, ye would love *Me* . . . ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do.” This so riled them that they exclaimed, “Say we not well Thou are a Samaritan, and hast a demon” (John 8:39-48).

On another occasion the Jews asked Him, “How long dost Thou make us to doubt? If Thou be the Christ, tell us plainly” (John 10:24). He at once exposed their hypocrisy by saying, “I told you, and ye believed not . . . . but ye believe not, because ye are not of My sheep . . . My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow Me*” (John 10:25-27). So angered were they at this that they “took stones again to stone Him.” Men will not tolerate One who pierces their religious disguise, exposes their shams, and repudiates their fair but empty profession. It is just the same today.

Who was so unwelcome here? Fifth, the One who *exposed and denounced sin*. Ah, this explains why Christ was not wanted here. He was a constant thorn in their sides: His holiness condemned their unholiness. Men wish to go their own way, to please themselves, to gratify their lusts. They want to be comfortable in their wickedness: therefore they resent that which searches the heart, pierces the conscience, rebukes their evil. Christ was absolutely uncompromising. He would not wink at wrong doing, but unsparingly denounced it, in whosoever it was found. He boldly affirmed, “For judgment I am come into this world” (John 9:41), that is, to discover men's secret characters, to prove they are blind in spiritual things, to demonstrate they loved darkness rather than light. His Person and preaching *tried* everything and everyone He came into contact with.

*Why was* (and is) Christ “despised and rejected of men”? First, *because He required inward purity*. Herein is the great difference between all human religions and the Divine: the former concern themselves with external performances, but the latter with the source of all conduct. “Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). It was Christ's exposition and enforcement of this truth which made Him so unpopular with the leaders. “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees,

hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is *within* the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are *within* full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but *within* ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt. 23:25-28).

Why was Christ “despised and rejected of men”? Second, *because He demanded repentance*. “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15) was His claimant call: that order is unchanging, for it is impossible to savingly believe the Gospel till the heart be contrite. Repentance is taking sides with God against ourselves: it is the unsparing judgment of ourselves because of our high-handed rebellion. It is a ceasing to love and tolerate sin and excusing ourselves for the commission of it. It is a mourning before God because of our transgressions of His holy Law. And therefore did Christ teach, “Except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish” (Luke 13:3), for He would not condone evil. He came to save His people *from* their sins, and not *in* them.

Why was Christ “despised and rejected of men”? Third, *because He insisted on the denial of self*, and this at two principal points, namely, the indulging and the exalting of self. All fleshly lusts are to be unsparingly mortified, and self-righteousness is allowed no place under the Gospel scheme. This was made unmistakably plain by our Lord's teaching: “If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Yet nothing is more contrary to the desires of the natural man, and Christ's insistence upon these terms of discipleship causes Him to be “despised and rejected of men.”

*How is* Christ “despised and rejected of men? In different ways and in varying degrees: professedly and practically, in words and in works. It is most important that this should be clearly recognized, for Satan deceives a great many souls at this point. He deludes them into supposing that because they are not guilty of what pertains to the avowed infidel and blatant atheist, therefore they are innocent of the fearful sin of slighting and defying the Lord Jesus. Ah, my reader, the solemn fact remains that there are millions of people in Christendom who though not atheists and infidels, yet despise and reject the Christ of God. “They profess that they know God; but *in works they deny Him*, being abominable, and disobedient, and unto every good work reprobate” (Titus 1:16). That verse clearly enunciates this principle.

Because of the limited space at our disposal, we are obliged to condense this last division so that the preacher will have to develop it for himself. Christ's *authority* is “despised” by those who disregard His precepts and commandments. Christ's *yoke* is “rejected” by those who are determined to be lord over themselves. Christ's *glory* is “despised” by those who bear His name yet have no concern whether their walk honours Him or no. Christ's *Gospel* is “rejected” by those who on the one hand affirm that sinners may be saved without repenting of and turning away from their sins, and on the other hand by those who teach that Heaven may be won by our own good works.

There are some who *intellectually* reject Christ, by repudiating His claims, denying that He is God the Son, assumed a holy and impeccable humanity, and died a vicarious death to save His people from their

sins. There are others who *virtually and practically* reject Christ. Just as there are those who profess to believe in the existence of God, own His power, and talk about His wondrous handiwork, yet who have not His fear upon them and are not in subjection to Him; so there are many who claim to trust in the finished work of Christ, yet their daily walk is no different from that of thousands of respectable worldlings. They profess to be Christian, yet are covetous, unscrupulous, untruthful, proud, self-willed, uncharitable; in a word, utterly unChristlike.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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October, 1937

### **Christ Our Exemplar.**

“He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Let it be duly considered that the principle design of the Apostle in this Epistle is to exhibit certain signs and marks, both negative and positive, for the examination or trial of men's claims to be Christians (see 5:13). It is in *that* light our verse must be interpreted: the *proof* of a saving interest in Christ is our *imitation* of Him. Were this criterion faithfully insisted upon today from the pulpit much of the empty profession now abounding would be clearly exposed. A claim is made: “he that *saith* he abideth in Him,” which signifies an interest in and communion with Him. The only way in which that claim can be *established* is by *walking* as Christ walked—*following* the example He has left us.

“Every man is bound to the imitation of Christ under penalty of forfeiting his claim to Christ. The necessity of this imitation of Christ convincingly appears in divers ways. First, *from the established order of salvation*, which is fixed and unalterable. God that hath appointed the end, hath also established the means and order by which men shall attain the ultimate end. Now conformity to Christ is the established method in which God will bring many souls to glory: 'For whom He did foreknow, He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the Firstborn among many brethren' (Rom. 8:29). The same God who hath predestinated men to salvation, hath in order thereunto, predestinated them unto conformity to Christ and this order of Heaven is never to be reversed; we may as well hope to be saved without Christ, as to be saved without conformity to Christ.

“Secondly, *the nature of Christ-mystical* requires this conformity, and renders it indispensably necessary. Otherwise, the body of Christ must be *heterogeneous*: of a nature different from the Head and how monstrous and uncomely would this be! This would represent Christ to the world in an image, or idea, much like that, 'This image's head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay' (Dan. 2:32, 33). Christ, the Head, is pure and holy, and therefore very unsuitable to sensual and worldly members. And therefore the Apostle in his description of Christ-mystical, describes the *members* of Christ (as they ought to be) of the same nature and quality with the Head: 'As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly; and as we have borne the image of the earthly, so we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.' That image or resemblance of Christ, which shall be complete and perfect after the resurrection, must be begun in its first draught here by the work of regeneration.

“Thirdly, this resemblance and conformity to Christ appears necessary from the communion which all believers have with Him in the same spirit of grace and holiness. Believers are called Christ's '*fellows*' or co-partners (Psa. 45:7) from their participation with Him of the same Spirit. God giveth the same Spirit unto us, which He more plentifully poured out upon Christ. Now where the same Spirit and principle is, there the same fruits and operations must be produced, according to the proportions and measures of the Spirit of grace communicated; and this reason is farther enforced by the very design and end of God in the infusion of the Spirit of grace: for it is plain from Ezekiel 36:27 that practical holiness and obedience are the scope and design of that infusion of the Spirit. The very innate property of the Spirit of God in men is to elevate their minds, set their affections upon heavenly things, purge their hearts from earthly dross, and fit them for a life of holiness and obedience. Its nature also is *assimilating*, and changeth them in whom it is into the same image with Jesus Christ, their Heavenly Head: 2 Corinthians 3:18.

“Fourthly, the necessity of this imitation of Christ may be argued from the design and end of Christ's exhibition to the world in a body of flesh. For though we detest that doctrine of the Socinians, which makes the exemplary life of Christ to be the whole end of His incarnation, yet we must not run so far from an error as to lose a precious Truth. We say, the satisfaction of His blood was a main and principal end of His incarnation, according to Matthew 20:28. We affirm also, that it was a great design and end of the incarnation of Christ to set before us a pattern of holiness for our imitation, for so speaks the Apostle: 'He hath left us an example, that we should follow his steps' (1 Peter 2:21); and this example of Christ greatly obliges believers to His imitation: 'let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus' (Phil. 2:5).

“Fifthly, our imitation of Christ is one of those great articles which every man is to subscribe, whom Christ will admit into the number of His disciples. 'Whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after Me, cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:27); and again, 'If any man serve Me, let him follow Me' (John 12:26). To this condition we have submitted, if we be sincere believers; and therefore are strictly bound to the imitation of Christ, not only by God's *command*, but by our own *consent*. But if we profess interest in Christ, when our hearts never consented to follow and imitate His example, then are we self-deceiving hypocrites, wholly disagreeing from the Scripture character of believers. They that are Christ's are there described as walking not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.

“Sixthly, *the honour of Christ* necessitates the conformity of Christians to His example, else what way is

there left to stop detracting mouths, and to vindicate the name of Christ from the reproaches of the world? How can wisdom be justified of her children, except it be this way? By what means shall we cut off occasion from such as desire occasion, but by regulating our lives by Christ's example? The world hath eyes to see what we *practice*, as well as ears to hear what we *profess*. Therefore, either show the consistency between your profession and practice, or you can never hope to vindicate the name and honour of the Lord Jesus” (John Flavell, 17th Century Puritan).

From all that has now been before us we may draw the following inferences. First, if all who claim a saving interest in Christ are strictly bound to imitate Him, then it follows that *Christianity is very unjustly charged* by the world with the evils and scandals of empty professors. Nothing can be more unrighteous and unreasonable, for Christianity severely censures loose and scandalous actions in all professors and therefore is *not* to be blamed for them. “For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:11, 12). Really, it is an argument greatly in favour of Christianity that even wicked men covet the name of it, though they only cloak their sins under it.

Second, if all professors forfeit their claim to a saving interest in Christ who endeavour not to sincerely and earnestly imitate Him in the holiness of His life, then *how small a number* of real Christians are there in the world! If flowery talking without strict walking, if common profession without holy practice, if Church membership without denying self and treading the Narrow Way were sufficient to constitute a Christian, then a considerable percentage of earth's population would be entitled to that name. But if Christ owns none but those who follow the example that He has left, then His flock is indeed a little one. The vast majority of those who claim to be Christians have a name to live, but are dead (Rev. 3:1), being such as walk after the flesh, following the course of this world and yielding their members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin (Rom. 6:13). The demands of Christ are too rigid for them: they prefer the Broad Road where the majority are found.

Third, *what blessed times* we should witness if true Christianity once generally obtained and prevailed in the world! How it would humble the proud, meeken the self-willed, and spiritualize those that are carnal! A perverse world has often charged Christianity with being the cause of all the tumults which are in it; whereas nothing but pure Christianity, in the power of it, can cure those epidemics of evil. If the great majority of our fellows were regenerated by the Spirit and brought to walk after Christ in holiness, living in meekness and self-denial, then would our prisons be closed—armies and navies down away with, jealousies and animosities removed, the wilderness and solitary places be glad and the desert would rejoice and blossom as the rose. That is what constitutes the great difference between Heaven and a world that lies in the Wicked One: holiness is the very atmosphere of the former, whereas it is hated and banned here.

Fourth, it also follows that *real Christians are the best companions*. It is a blessed thing to consort with those who are genuinely seeking to follow the examples of Christ, for the holiness, heavenly-mindedness, and spiritual graces which were in Him, in their measure, are to be found in all true disciples of His. They show forth the praises of Him who has called them out of darkness into light. Something of the fruit of the Spirit is to be seen in all those whom He indwells. Yet it must be remembered that there is a great deal of difference between one Christian and another and that the best is sanctified but in part. If there be

something engaging and sweet, there is also that which is distasteful and bitter in the most spiritual and mature saints. This it is which gives us occasion to forbear one another in love. Nevertheless, this is most certain, that notwithstanding all their infirmities and corruptions, the Lord's people are the best companions to be found on this earth. Happy are they who are now enjoying fellowship with those in whom can be discerned the likeness of Christ.

Fifth, if no man's claim to being Christ's be warranted except so far as he is walking according to Him, then *how groundless and worthless* are the expectation of all unsanctified persons who walk after their own lusts. "None are more forward to claim the privileges of religion than those that reject the duties of it; multitudes hope to be saved by Christ, who yet refuse to be governed by Him. But such hopes have no Scripture warrant to support them; yea, they have many Scripture testimonies against them. 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor 6:9, 10). O how many thousand vain hopes are laid in the dust, and how many thousand souls are sentenced to Hell by this one Scripture!" (John Flavel, 1660).

Then how it behooves those of us who profess to be Christian to be not conformed to this world but to be transformed by the renewing of our minds. How we should strive to follow Christ's steps. *That* should be the great business of our lives, as it is the chief scope of the Gospel. If Christ has conformed Himself to us by taking upon Him our nature, how reasonable it is that we should conform ourselves to Him in a way of obedience and sanctification. He came under the Law for our sakes (Gal. 4:4), then the least we can do in return is to gladly take His yoke upon us. It was Christ's abasement to conform Himself to those who were infinitely beneath Him—it will be our advancement to conform ourselves to Him who is so high above us. Surely the love of Christ must constrain us to spare no efforts to "grow up into Him in *all things*" (Eph. 4:15).

If we shall be conformed to Him in Glory, how logical it is that we should now conform ourselves to Him in holiness. "We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is" (1 John 3:2), like Him not only in our souls but our bodies, too, will be transformed like unto His (Phil. 3:21). What a motive is this to bring us into conformity with Christ here, especially seeing that our conformity to Him in holiness is the *evidence of our conformity to Him in Glory* (Rom. 6:5). The conformity of our lives to Christ is our highest excellence in this world, for the measure of our grace is to be estimated by this rule. So far as we imitate Christ, and no farther, are we of any real help and benefit to those around us; contrariwise, the less we be conformed to Christ, the greater hindrances and stumblingblocks are we both to the saved and unsaved. What a weighty and solemn consideration is this! How it should drive us to our knees, seeking grace to become closer followers of Christ.

"That ye would *walk worthy* of God, who hath called you unto His kingdom and glory" (1 Thess. 2:12). By "worthiness" the Apostle had no reference to what is meritorious, but to that comeliness and decorum which befits a Christian. As Davenant has pointed out, "The word 'worthy' as used in Scripture does not always denote an exact proportion of equality between one thing and another, but a certain suitableness and fitness which excludes inconsistency." Now to walk worthy of God is to walk as *Christ* walked, and

any deviation from that standard is a reflection upon our profession and a reproach upon Him. It is for our own peace and joy that we be conformed to Christ's pattern: the answer of a good conscience and the smile of God's approbation are rich compensation for denying the flesh. A comfortable death is the ordinary close of a holy life: "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace" (Psa. 37:37). Then let us make every effort unto a closer following of Christ.

In drawing to a conclusion let us seek to pen a few lines of comfort to those who are cast down by the realization of how far, far short they come to measuring up to the standard which Christ has set before them. According to the yearnings of the new nature, you *have* sincerely endeavoured to follow Christ's example but being weak in grace and meeting with much opposition from the flesh and temptations from the Devil, you have been frequently turned aside from the holy purposes and designs of your honest hearts to the great grief and discouragement of your souls. You can heartily say with David, "O that my ways were directed to keep Thy statutes!" (Psa. 119:5), and you have tried hard and long to follow after exact holiness, "If by any means" you might attain unto it. But your efforts have been repeatedly thwarted, your aspirations dashed and you have to cry "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me?" (Rom. 7:24).

First, let us assure the genuinely exercised soul that such defects in obedience do not invalidate your justification, or in any wise affect your acceptance with and standing before God. Your justification is built *not* upon *your* obedience, but upon *Christ's*. However imperfect you are in yourself, you are "complete in Him" (Col. 2:10). Woe had it been to Abraham, Moses, David, Paul if their justification had depended upon their own holiness and good works. Let not, then, your sad failures dampen your joy in Christ but rather be increasingly thankful for His robe of righteousness which hides your filthy rags! Second, your heart-anguish over your unlikeness to Christ, instead of being a proof that you are less sanctified than those who *grieve not* over their lack of conformity to Him, evidences you are *more* sanctified than they, for it shows you are better acquainted with your heart than they are, have a deeper loathing of sin and love God more. The most eminent saints have made the bitterest lamentation on this account: Psalm 38:4.

Third, the Holy Spirit makes an excellent use of your infirmities and turns your failures unto your spiritual advantages. By those very defects He hides pride from your eyes, subdues your self-righteousness, causes you to appreciate more deeply the riches of free grace and place a higher value upon the precious blood of the Lamb. By your many falls He makes you to long more ardently for Heaven and gradually reconciles you to the prospect of death. The more a holy soul is buffeted by sin and Satan, the more sincerely will he cry, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psa. 55:6). "O the blessed chemistry of Heaven, to extract such mercies out of such miseries" (J. Flavell), to make sweet flowers spring up out of such bitter roots. Fourth, your bewailed infirmities do not break the bond of the Everlasting Covenant: that holds firm, notwithstanding your many defects and corruptions. "Iniquities prevail against me" said David, yet in the same breath he added "Thou shalt purge them away" (Psa. 65:3).

Fifth, though the defects of your obedience are grievous to God, yet your deep sorrows for them are well-pleasing in His sight: "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise" (Psa. 51:17). Sixth, your very grief is a conformity to Christ: for when here He was "the Man of sorrows." If He suffered because of our sins, shall we not be made to weep over them?

Seventh, “Though God has left many defects to humble you, yet He hath given many things to comfort. This is a comfort, that the desire of thy soul is to God and the remembrance of His name. This is a comfort, that thy sins are not thy delight as once they were but thy shame and sorrow. This is a comfort, that thy case is not singular but more or less the *same* complaints and sorrows are found in *all* gracious souls through the world” (J. Flavell, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1937

### **Spiritual Liars.**

“Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa. 119:29). How we should be humbled by such a prayer as this, for it is evidently an appropriate one for all the Lord's people. The fact that it is not only recorded in Holy Writ, but here in the 119th Psalm, rather than in the prayer of a particular individual on some special occasion, plainly intimates this. There is nothing in all the Old Testament of wider latitude and of more general application than the various petitions found in this Psalm: each of them is pertinent to the experiences and exigencies of *all* the saints, and the one now before us is certainly no exception, no matter how loathe we may be to acknowledge the truth of it. Reader and writer alike are spiritual liars, guilty of dissembling before both man and God.

There are different kinds of lies; some are spoken, others are acted; some are intentional, others involuntary. We often pretend to be what we are not, and are indictable with much formality. We are guilty of making promises to God which we break, of uttering penitential confessions while our hearts are hard and unaffected, of asking for spiritual blessings for which we have no felt need, or returning thanks for mercies which have made no impression upon us; and all of this is a species of abominable dissimulation. When we are convicted and made conscience of the same we cry, “Remove from me the way of lying!” Below is a message recently sent to two dear souls who enjoy little assurance; may it please the Lord to make the same a blessing unto others of His distressed family.

“Remove from me the way of lying.” How *well suited* is this petition to the quickened child of God, who

is often made painfully conscious of how much insincerity and hypocrisy is mixed up with his worship, supplications, repentance, and thanksgivings! When an honest heart examines his religious life, reviews his prayers, and ponders his character and conduct, he perceives how little *reality* and how much dissimulation characterises all his spiritual exercises, until at times it seems that he himself and all pertaining to his solemn profession is only a *sham*. If it were not so it would be quite useless for him to pray. “Remove from me the way of lying.” Observe how strongly this is expressed: not simply “deliver me from lying,” but “the way of lying”—a regular course, a confirmed habit.

Now the very fact that *we* find this petition so well-suited to our case supplies clear evidence that we *must* be among those who are enabled to see themselves in *God's* light, for no Satan-blinded and sin-deceived soul feels and knows himself to be a spiritual liar. Moreover, the petitions which the Spirit of Truth has so graciously recorded in this 119th Psalm are most obviously neither designed for nor suited to those who are dead in trespasses and sins. Should not this very consideration at least revive the spark of assurance which so often waxes dim in your breasts? Furthermore, the very fact that *you can*, from the depths of your soul, feelingly pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” is clear proof that you are *not* among those who love darkness rather than light. You *want to be* genuine with God, to be delivered from all insincerity, and this evidences an honest root amid the rank weeds and thistles of deception and formality.

Perhaps you answer, I follow you thus far, but alas, I have not the ear of God. Countless times have I confessed to Him my lack of sincerity, and begged Him, (in substance at least, if not in those identical words) to “Remove from me the way of lying”; but so far from my prayer being answered, I am conscious of *increasing unreality* in my devotions. Thank God that you *are* so conscious, dear brother and sister: if God had given you up “to a reprobate mind” (as He had the sovereign right to do, and as He *has* countless millions of our fellow creatures), then you would be quite *unconscious* of “the deceitfulness of sin,” quite *indifferent to* the unreality of your devotions. I ask you, frankly, Is it not so? Yet, perhaps, that hardly removes your difficulty.

But this does: “Remove from me the way of lying,” like many another prayer, awaits its answer till the life to come! We were *born* in “the way of lying”: it is the very sphere in which “the flesh” lives, moves and has its being; the way of lying ends only when the flesh itself is removed. Till then, the quickened soul is burdened, exercised, shocked, plagued, grieved by it—by the unreality and formality of his devotions—and that very grief finds expression in this prayer which is so well suited to some exercises of soul. Then step out of your mental gloom for a moment, into the warm sunshine of the clear *implications* of this verse, and thank God for having placed in your hands, yes, and put into your mouths, such a prayer as this, which, because it *is* so well suited to your case, denotes that you are *entitled* to make use of the same; which, in turn, proves *you* belong to that quickened company who are painfully aware of the plague of their own hearts.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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November, 1937

### **The Believer's Paradox.**

“Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). This was the honest confession of one whose faith had been put to a most severe test. It issued from a man who had a son possessed by a demon, which grievously tormented him: “wheresoever he taketh him, he teareth him: and he foameth, and gnasheth with his teeth, and pineth away” (v. 18). What a sore trial was that for a tender parent! How thankful you should be, my reader, if in the sovereignty of God *you* are blest with normal and healthy children; and how sympathetic we should be toward those who have afflicted ones! No doubt this man had consulted different physicians, and perhaps had conferred with his pastor; but no relief had been obtained. What a testing of his submission to the will of God! Then he sought aid from Christ's disciples, but they had been unable to effect any cure, and “hope deferred maketh the heart sick.” Such, in brief, is the background of our text.

And now the great Physician commanded that the tormented one should be brought to Him, but we read “And when he saw Him, straightway the spirit tare him; and he fell on the ground, and wallowed foaming” (v. 20). Yes, matters generally seem to *get worse* with us when the Lord begins to take us in hand—to demonstrate that our extremity is God's opportunity to manifest His sufficiency. It was thus with the afflicted Hebrews in Egypt. The darkest hour precedes the dawn. But what a tremendous testing of this man's faith to behold his poor son foaming in agony at the Saviour's feet! “And He asked his father, How long is it ago since this came unto him? And he said, Of a child. And oftentimes it hath cast him into the fire, and into the waters, to destroy him: but *if* Thou canst do anything, have compassion on us, and help us”

(vv. 21, 22). Did the Lord Jesus indignantly rebuke him for questioning His power, and turn away in disgust? No, for “great is His mercy.” Instead, He answered, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth” (v. 23), and we are told “And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

“Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” How paradoxical was this language, for it was almost, if not quite, a contradiction in terms. If this man was a genuine believer, then why should he bemoan his unbelief? Or, since he bemoaned his unbelief, with what propriety could he claim to be a believer? It is like a man saying, I am hot, help thou my shivering coldness; I am strong, help my tottering weakness; for faith and unbelief are *opposites*. Ah there are many paradoxes in the Christian life, which are quite unintelligible to the wise of this world. That man has to become a fool in order to be wise (1 Cor. 3:18), that he has to become a pauper in order to be made rich (Matt. 5:3), that he has to be made weak in order to become strong (2 Cor. 12:10), are enigmas that proud philosophers cannot elucidate. But thank God, what remains mysterious to the wise and prudent among men, is revealed to those who are babes in His family.

Unbelief is part of *the entail of the Fall*. By nature all of us are “children in whom is *no* faith” (Deut. 32:20). Frightful thing is that! To have a heart which distrusts God; to have a heart which is ever prone to lean upon anyone and anything rather than upon the Lord Himself; to forsake the Fountain, and betake ourselves to “cisterns which hold no water.” Such is fallen man. Plenty of faith in himself, faith in his fellows, till he be disillusioned and disappointed; but no faith *in God*. That it is which explains why Christ is “despised and rejected of men,” so that in the days of His flesh He cried “O *faithless* and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?” (Matt. 17:17). This it is which accounts for the universal attitude of men toward both the Law and the Gospel: they believe not the Author and Giver of them, they are destitute of faith in Him; and thus they will continue all their days unless the Holy Spirit sovereignly intervenes and performs a miracle of grace in their hearts.

Unbelief *remains* in the hearts even of the regenerate. Though God imparts to them the gift of faith, he removes not (in this life) the root of unbelief. The Heroes of Faith, whose portraits hang upon the walls of fame in Hebrews 11, experienced that solemn fact. Look at Abraham, the father of all them that believe: when famine arose in Canaan he went down to Egypt for succour, and so afraid was he to trust his wife in the hands of God, he told a half-lie by saying she was his sister. Look at Moses; afraid to return to Egypt and confront Pharaoh after Jehovah had appeared to him at the burning bush and had promised the deliverance of His people (Exo. 3); and later, complaining to Him because he had so evilly dealt with Israel (Exo. 5:22, 23). Look at David, the slayer of Goliath, yet saying in his heart “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1 Sam. 27:1). Look at the once intrepid Elijah, fleeing in terror from Jezebel. Ah, my reader, the Holy Spirit has delineated the characters of the saints in the colours of truth and reality; not as they ought to have been, but as they actually were.

Unbelief is *the great burden* of the saint. It grieves his soul: the man in our text *wept* over it—do you? Feign would the Christian be freed from this incubus, but the Lord does not see fit to remove it in this life. Frequently it acts like a cloud that covers the sun, for there is nothing so effectual as unbelief in hiding from us the light of God's countenance. It fetters our spiritual movements and impedes our progress. There

are times when the believer fears that his unbelief will utterly sink him. Yet painful though this experience be, it is nevertheless a most hopeful and encouraging sign. It is not until God has communicated faith that any soul is *conscious of its unbelief!*—a living faith is necessary in order to recognize our dead unbelief. There must be Divine light to see its existence and Divine light to feel its power. Here, then, is solid comfort for those who are groaning over this burden: in your *unregenerate* days you were never *exercised over your unbelief!*

To genuinely mourn for our wicked unbelief is a sure evidence that Divine life is present in the soul. Those who are strangers to God certainly do not make conscience of such matters—how can they when they are quite unconscious of the plague of their hearts! But the Christian is not only conscious of unbelief, he goes to God and makes humble and contrite *confession* of the same. Yes, it is a sense of this grievous burden which drives him to the great Physician, crying, “Lord, I believe; *help Thou* mine unbelief.” A true Christian does not cloak or excuse his unbelief, but honestly acknowledges it before God. Nor does he sit still and pity himself as one who is totally impotent and without any responsibility in the matter. No, he genuinely seeks “help,” which clearly denotes he is *resisting* this enemy, but needs Divine assistance. True, without Christ he can do nothing (John 15:5), but he *can* do all things by Christ strengthening him (Phil. 4:13).

Here, then, is the solution to the difficulty and the explanation of the paradox presented by the language in our text. There are two distinct and totally different principles or “natures” indwelling the saint: faith and unbelief, and there is a continual opposition between them. They issue from the “spirit” and the “flesh,” concerning which we read, “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things which ye would” (Gal. 5:17). It is this unceasing warfare between the two antagonistic principles that give rise to a *dual experience*: one moment trusting God, the next doubting Him; one moment resting upon and drawing comfort from His promises, the next having no confidence in the same. And this dual and distressing experience moves him to cry “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” Ah, my reader, if *you* are not plagued with and burdened by unbelief, if you do not humbly confess the same to God and seek His help about it, then are you of all men most miserable.

Contrariwise, as we have already said, here is that which provides real comfort for the conscience-distressed and Satan-harassed soul. How often the Devil will tell a Christian, “Your profession is an empty one: you do not belong to the Household of Faith—how can you, when filled with unbelief!?” Listen, dear friend: the man in our text was a genuine believer, yet he owned *his* unbelief; and that is *recorded* for our instruction and comfort. This is one of the plainest possible proofs that we *are* believers. No unbeliever ever shed tears over his unbelief; no empty professor ever groaned because of his questioning of God; no hypocrite is burdened by his doubts and fears. No; such are filled with carnal confidence and fleshly assurance: *they* have not had a doubt about their salvation for years past; they can exercise faith any time, as easily as you can turn a tap and make the water come; but such is not the faith of God's elect.

“Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” There are four things here claiming our attention. First, the Paradox presented: this, together with its solution, we have considered above. Second, a Fact affirmed: “Lord, I believe.” Third, a Request preferred: “help Thou.” Fourth, a Confession made: “mine unbelief.”

As it is often helpful to depart from the verbal arrangement of a text, we will do so here, and take up its several clauses in their inverse order, looking at this man's confession, then his petition for help, and then the plea by which he supported his request: "I believe."

*The Confession made:* "mine unbelief." We will, very briefly, observe four things in connection with the same. First, it was an *honest* confession. This is the first thing that God requires from any praying soul: sincerity, genuineness, reality. He is not to be imposed upon by cant, nor will the mere uttering of words, however scriptural, gain His ear. Then be frank and artless in all your dealings with God, and never pretend to be what you are not: to the very end of your earthly pilgrimage, you will be (in yourself) a vile sinner, unworthy of the least of His mercies. This man did not claim to possess a faith that never wavered or boast that he was free from doubts and fears. No, he honestly *acknowledged* that the sum of his faith was frequently eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief. O to be delivered from all guile when approaching the Throne of Grace.

Second, his confession was an *humble* one. That is the next thing which God requires from the praying soul: that he strip himself of the rags of self-righteousness and come before Him as one who is sinful and needy. This is very evident from the Epistle to the Laodiceans: they refused to abase themselves and take their proper place before the Lord. His charge was, "Thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked" (Rev. 3:17). Alas, to how many professing Christians do those solemn words apply today! To all such Christ says, "I counsel thee to buy of Me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see" (v. 18). It is just at this very point that the Christian is distinguished from the hypocrite: the former humbles himself and takes his place before God in the dust, acknowledging his wicked unbelief.

Third, his confession was a *feeling* one, and this is the next thing which God requires from each praying soul, for He desires "truth (reality) in the inward parts" (Psa. 51:6). It is not accurate and pious expressions, but a real sense of need in the soul which constitutes the essence of prayer. I might as well kneel down and worship gods of stone, as offer to the living God a prayer of words alone. That the confession of our text *was* a feeling one is evidenced by the fact that it was accompanied by *tears*. If the writer may be permitted to speak for his readers, Is it not at *this* point that we so often fail the worst, especially in the confessing of our sins. Alas, how little are our hearts affected by them: how mechanical and impenitent are the owning of our faults. Lord, melt our hard hearts.

Fourth, it was a *representative* confession, by which we mean it was suited to the case of all God's children. There will never come a time in this world when such language is unfitted even for those who are members of the Household of Faith. No matter how much God is graciously pleased to increase our faith, indwelling unbelief will still be present to struggle against it. It is just this element which renders the prayers of Scripture so pertinent to the saints of all ages: they exactly suit their case and express their sentiments. "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19).

Let us consider next *his Petition*, for there is much in the details of this incident which affords us valuable

instruction on the subject of prayer: “*help, Lord.*” First, look again at the *occasion* of it. This was an overwhelming anxiety over his afflicted son, finding relief in unburdening his heart to the Lord. And that is what all real supplication is. There is far more genuine petitioning of God in seasons of adversity than during times of prosperity; and that is the reason why many a grief-wrung ejaculation, or an inarticulate groan reaches God's ear, when many a nicely worded and carnally-admired “prayer” never reaches any higher than the ceiling of the room. Read through Psalm 107 and observe the repeated “Then”! When there is a real sense of need, a burdened soul requires no external “helps” as to what to say and how to say it; a cry spontaneously emanates from the stricken soul and wings its way to Heaven.

But there was something more than the pitiful state of his son which prompted this petition: the father was conscious that his own unbelief was hindering the desired blessing (or why did he cry out for “help” against it), and *that* was unbearable. If you had to carry a basket containing some articles which weighed only a few ounces, you would never think of asking someone for a helping hand; but if you were staggering along with a load that weighed twenty or thirty pounds, you would beg assistance—unless you were too proud and independent to seek it. And so it is in heart matters: the more we make conscience of the thoughts and intents of the same, the more we are exercised over that which is disorderly and God-dishonouring, and the more we grow in grace, the more keenly we shall feel such irregularities.

Second, consider the *spirituality* of his plea. The more spiritual the soul becomes, the more spiritual are its petitions. It is a sure mark of spiritual immaturity when relief from bodily ailments are more valued by us than deliverance from moral maladies, or when material mercies are prized above an increase of our graces. This man did not cry out, “Lord, heal my son”—that had been *natural*; but “Lord, help mine unbelief”—that was truly *spiritual*. The fact is that many of the most spiritual prayers issue from those who regard themselves as being the least spiritual; yea, who seriously doubt if they have any spirituality at all. Unspiritual souls never pray for help against unbelief. It is much to be thankful for when we are made painfully conscious of our unbelief, for thousands of church-members never are so; and it is a still greater cause for praise when we are honestly burdened thereby, and moved to pray for deliverance.

Third, its *meaning*. This man recognized that the Lord was the only one who could effectually aid him. Ah, it is a grand thing when we are brought to the point where we realize that none but God Himself can subdue the workings of this evil in us. All self-help is vain; all fellow-creatures are powerless to render any relief—they cannot relieve themselves, still less others. Then “Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and He shall *sustain thee*” (Psa. 55:22). This man definitely applied to Christ. It is indeed a blessed thing when we are so oppressed by our unbelief that we betake ourselves to the great Physician: so many groan under it, but do no more; others hug it to themselves, and get no further. “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief”: put forth Thy gracious power and subdue this God-dishonouring spirit; enable me to strive against it; suffer me not to excuse it, or to pity myself for it and fatalistically yield to it; cause me to regard it as an evil to be hated, an enemy to be resisted, a sin to be confessed.

Fourth, mark its *comprehensiveness*. His petition was exceeding brief, yet it covered much ground. As faith is the root from which all good works proceed, so unbelief is the source of all evil. This is our master sin, “*the sin which doth so easily beset us*” (Heb. 12:1). Unbelief is the cause of all our troubles and failures. This is the strategic point where Satan concentrates his forces against us, and therefore it is *here*

above all that we need Divine *help*. “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief”: Lord, I do expect Thee to undertake for me, yet I am not able to exclude all doubting; I am persuaded of Thy power and pity, but enable me to rely upon Thee more fully and constantly.

We turn now to *the Plea* which accompanied this prayer for help, for so we may legitimately regard these words, “Lord, I believe.” His cry for Divine assistance, accompanied by an humble confession, was made on this ground: because I believe, Lord, take pity upon me and subdue mine unbelief. To obtain the granting of our petition it must be backed up by some valid and suitable argument. Prayer is something more than presenting a request to God; it is *pleading with Him*, presenting some reason why He should grant that for which we ask. There are various pleas we may make; such as, because I am in deep need of the same, because Thou hast promised to supply it, because it will be for Thy glory to do so; for Christ's sake. This is what the Lord means when He says, “Produce your cause, saith the LORD; bring forth your strong reasons, saith the King of Jacob” (Isa. 41:21).

First, then, this plea was a *necessary* one, for God will not hear an unbeliever. “But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). “Lord, I believe,” not as I would do, nor as I should do; yet I deny not Thy existence, I question not the verity of Thy Word, I am persuaded Thou canst not lie, I doubt not Thy power, Thy goodness, Thy mercy. I *believe*, though feebly, haltingly, spasmodically. I appeal to Thee, O Thou Searcher of hearts: Thou seest the little spark of fire beneath the smouldering flax, the flicker of faith behind the clouds of unbelief. Ah, is it not at this point we so often fail: when presenting our petitions we must *accompany them with suitable pleas*, for then God sees we are in earnest. Study carefully Christ's prayer in John 17 and observe how each request is supported by a reason or plea—either before or after, in the words “that,” “for,” etc.

Second, it is an *instructive* plea. What valuable teaching is there here for those who desire to pray aright! In our ignorance and foolishness, *we* had probably concluded that such a prayer as this man made was unsuitable and unseemly—a contradiction in terms. It is recorded for our learning. One great lesson it inculcates is that we ought never to look on our graces without also viewing our infirmities; nor should we confess our sins without also owning the Spirit's fruit in us. For example, if I am made sensible of my deep need of more humility, when asking God for the same, I should acknowledge my pride; contrariwise, when confessing my pride, I should thank God for humbling my heart to do so. If I am begging for more patience and submission, I must confess my self-will and fractiousness; yet also thank God for making me feel my need of the opposites.

Third, it was an *acceptable* plea. God is pleased when His people own their relationship to Him, pleading that they are His children, and acknowledging the Spirit's work within. It is a false and reprehensible humility which refuses so to do. Observe the example of David: “O my God, I *trust* in Thee: let not mine enemies triumph over me” (Psa. 25:2); “In Thee, O LORD, *do I* put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in Thy righteousness” (Psa. 31:1); “Preserve my soul; *for I am holy*: O Thou my God, save Thy servant that *trusteth* in Thee” (Psa. 86:2). Observe how Asaph pleaded with God the relationship which Israel sustained to Him: “Remember Thy congregation, which Thou hast purchased of old” (Psa. 74:2). This is the very ground taken by our great High Priest when interceding for His people: “I pray for them: I

pray not for the world, but for them which Thou hast given Me; *for they are Thine*” (John 17:9). We, then, shall pray acceptably if we plead “Lord, I am Thine, undertake for me; I am a believer, subdue mine unbelief.”

Fourth, it was a *prevailing* plea. Of course it was: had not Christ said, “If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.” This dear man's petition gained the day: the Lord undertook for him, and his poor son was made whole. When we really believe, the battle is half, nay nine-tenths, won. It all turns upon that: it is the prayer of faith which gains the ear and moves the hand of God. Hence, when we read of Abraham that “he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:20), *we* should cry “Lord, *I believe*; help Though mine unbelief.” As we read, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally, and upbraideth not; and it *shall* be given him” (James 1:5), *we* should cry “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief,” for it is written, “but let him *ask in faith* nothing wavering.”

We may apply our text to those *seeking salvation*. There may be a reader of this article who is halting between two opinions. He is convinced that Christ alone can meet his needs and satisfy his soul, yet he finds it so hard to give up the world and abandon his idols. He knows full well that in Christ alone is eternal life to be found, yet Satan still has such a hold upon him that he cannot surrender to the Lord Jesus and forsake the pleasures of sin. Then come to Him and say, “Lord, I believe; *help Thou* mine unbelief.” Or, it may be, he feels himself to be such a godless wretch that he fears his case is hopeless: having sinned so grievously against light and privileges, he dares not venture upon the Gospel promises. Come to Christ and cry from the heart, “Lord I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

Our text may be applied unto *God's providences*. The Christian can say “the LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psa. 23:1), yet when circumstances seem to be all against him, he is unable to appropriate the blessed truth that God shall supply all his need (Phil. 4:19). Fearful that he shall come to abject destitution, he is unable to fully trust the Lord. Then come to Christ and say, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” Many a one can say I am sure that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28) means what it says, yet there are some things in his circumstances which he finds exceedingly difficult to believe will issue in real good for him. Instead of submitting to God's disposing will, he is often full of rebellion; instead of kissing the rod, he finds himself kicking against it. Then come to Christ and say, “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.”

Our text may be applied to *personal assurance*. How many a Satan-harassed believer is exclaiming, I greatly fear that I cannot be among the saved, for if I were, I surely would not sin as I do. In view of the raging of my lusts, the frequency of which they overcome my every effort to resist them, it would be presumptuous to affirm that the reigning power of sin was dethroned within *me*. My friend, David cried “iniquities prevail against me” (Psa. 65:3). But you say, My heart is such a sink of iniquity, I dare not claim to be regenerated; often I do not loathe sin, nor even desire to. Ah, but it is not always thus: are not such seasons followed by contrition and confession!? Yes, you say, but right after I fall again into the mire, sometimes deeper than before; ah, but do you *stay* there? Do you completely abandon the Throne of Grace? Does not a cry of distress go up from you to God? Then *continue* crying “Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.” May God add His blessing to this sermon for His name's sake.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1937

### **Signs of the Times.**

No, let us assure the spiritual reader at the outset that we are not going to waste his time nor our space by a consideration of the latest doings of Hitler, [this was written in 1937] Mussolini, and Co. “Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth” (Isa. 45:9): the child of God has nothing to do with *their* activities. It is something far more solemn than anything occurring in the political realm that we are now going to write upon, namely, *the soul-deceiving character* of most of the “Evangelism” of this degenerate and apostate generation.

It is generally recognized that *spirituality* is at a low ebb in Christendom, and not a few perceive that *sound doctrine* is rapidly on the wane, yet many of the Lord's people take comfort from supposing that the Gospel is still being widely preached and that large numbers are being saved thereby. Alas, their optimistic supposition is ill-founded and grounded in sand. If the “message” now being delivered in Mission Halls be examined, if the “tracts” which are scattered among the unchurched masses be scrutinized, if the “open air” speakers be carefully listened to, if the “sermons” or “addresses” of a “Soul-winning campaign” be analyzed; in short, if modern “Evangelism” be weighed in the balances of Holy Writ, it will be found wanting—*lacking* that which is vital to a genuine conversion, *lacking* what is essential if sinners are to be shown their need of a Saviour, *lacking* that which will produce the transfigured lives of new creatures in Christ Jesus.

It is in no captious spirit that we write, seeking to make a man an offender for a word. It is not that we are

looking for perfection, and complain because we cannot find it; nor that we criticise others because they are not doing things as *we* think they should be done. No; no, it is a matter far more serious than that. The “evangelism” of the day is not only superficial to the last degree, but it is *radically defective*. It is utterly lacking a foundation on which to base an appeal for sinners to come to Christ. There is not only a lamentable lack of proportion (the mercy of God being made far more prominent than His holiness, His love than His wrath), but there is a *fatal omission* of that which God has given for the purpose of imparting a knowledge of sin. There is not only reprehensible introducing of “bright singing,” humorous witticisms and entertaining anecdotes, but there is a *studied omission of the dark background* upon which alone the Gospel can effectually shine forth.

But serious indeed as is the above indictment, it is only half of it—the negative side, that which is *lacking*. Worse still is that which is being retailed by the cheap-jerk evangelists of the day. The *positive content* of their message is nothing but a throwing of dust in the eyes of the sinner. His soul is put to sleep by the Devil's opiate, ministered in a most unsuspecting form. Those who really receive the “message” which is now being given out from most of the “orthodox” pulpits and platforms today are being fatally deceived. It is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but unless God sovereignly intervenes by a miracle of grace, all who follow it will surely find that the ends thereof are the ways of death. Ten of thousands who confidently imagine they are bound for Heaven will get a terrible disillusionment when they awake in Hell.

*What is the Gospel?* Is it a message of glad tidings from Heaven to make God-defying rebels at ease in their wickedness? Is it given for the purpose of assuring the pleasure-crazy young people that, providing they only “believe” there is nothing for them to fear in the future? One would certainly think so from the way in which the Gospel is presented—or rather perverted—by most of the “evangelists,” and the more so when we look at *the lives* of their “converts.” Surely those with any degree of spiritual discernment must perceive that to assure such that God loves them and His Son died for them, and that a full pardon for all their sins (past, present, and future) can be obtained by simply “accepting Christ as their personal Saviour,” is but a casting of pearls before swine.

*The Gospel is not a thing apart.* It is not something independent of the prior revelation of God's Law. It is not an announcement that God has relaxed His justice or lowered the standard of His holiness. So far from that, when *Scripturally expounded* the Gospel presents the clearest demonstration and the most positive proof of the inexorableness of God's justice and of His infinite abhorrence of sin. But for *Scripturally expounding* the Gospel, beardless youths and businessmen who devote their spare time to “evangelistic effort,” are *quite unqualified*. Alas that the pride of the flesh suffers so many incompetent ones to rush in where those much wiser fear to tread. It is this multiplying of novices that is largely responsible for the woeful situation now confronting us, and because the “churches” and “assemblies” are so largely filled with *their* “converts,” explains why they are so unspiritual and worldly.

No, my reader, the Gospel is very, very far from making light of sin. It reveals to us the terrible sword of His justice smiting His beloved Son in order that atonement might be made for the transgressions of His people. So far from the Gospel setting aside the Law, it exhibits the Saviour enduring the curse of it. Calvary supplied the most solemn and awe-inspiring display of *God's hatred of sin* that time or eternity

will ever furnish. And do you imagine that the Gospel is magnified or God glorified by going to worldlings and telling them that they “may be saved at this moment by simply accepting Christ as their personal Saviour” *while they are* wedded to their idols and their hearts still in love with sin? If I do so, I tell them *a lie*, pervert the Gospel, insult Christ, and turn the grace of God into lasciviousness.

No doubt some readers are ready to object to our “harsh” and “sarcastic” statements above by asking, When the question was put “What must I do to be saved?” did not an inspired Apostle expressly say “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved?” Can we err, then, if *we* tell sinners the same thing today? Have we not Divine warrant for so doing? True, those words are found in Holy Writ, and because they *are*, many superficial and untrained people conclude they are justified in repeating them to all and sundry. But let it be pointed out that Acts 16:31 was not addressed to a promiscuous multitude, but *to a particular individual*, which at once intimates that it is *not* a message to be indiscriminately sounded forth, but rather a special word, to those *whose characters correspond* to the one to whom it was first spoken.

Verses of Scripture must not be wrenched from their setting, but weighed, interpreted, and applied *in accord with their context*; and *that* calls for prayerful consideration, careful meditation, and prolonged study; and it is failure at *this* point which accounts for these shoddy and worthless “messages” of this rush-ahead age. Look at the context of Acts 16:31, and what do we find? What was the occasion, and *to whom* was it that the Apostle and his companion said “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ”? A sevenfold answer is there furnished, which supplies a striking and complete delineation of the character of those to whom we are warranted in giving this truly evangelistic word. As we briefly names these seven details, let the reader carefully *ponder* them.

First, the man to whom those words were spoken had just witnessed *the miracle-working power of God*. “And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed” (Acts 16:26). Second, in consequence thereof, the man was deeply stirred, even to the point of self-despair: “He drew out his sword, and would have killed himself, supposing that the prisoners had been fled” (v. 27). Third, he felt *the need of illumination*: “Then he called for a light” (v. 29). Fourth, his *self-complacency was utterly shattered*, for he “came trembling” (v. 29). Fifth, he took his proper place (before God)—*in the dust*, for he “fell down before Paul and Silas” (v. 29). Sixth, he showed respect and *consideration for God's servants*, for he “brought them out” (v. 30). Seventh, then, with *a deep concern for his soul*, he asked “what must I do to be saved?”

Here, then, is something definite for our guidance—if we are willing to be guided. It was no giddy, careless, unconcerned person, who was exhorted to “simply” believe; but instead, one who gave clear evidence that a mighty work of God had already been wrought within him. He was *an awakened soul* (v. 27). In *his* case there was no need to press upon him his lost condition, for obviously he felt it; nor were the apostles required to urge upon him the duty of repentance, for his entire demeanour betokened his contrition. But to apply the words spoken to *him* unto those who are totally blind to their depraved state and completely dead toward God, would be more foolish than placing a bottle of smelling-salts to the nose of one who had just been dragged unconscious out of the water. Let the critic of this article read carefully

through the Acts and see if he can find a single instance of the Apostles addressing a promiscuous audience or a company of idolatrous heathen and “simply” telling them to believe in Christ.

Just as the world was not ready for the New Testament before it received the Old, just as the Jews were not prepared for the ministry of Christ until John the Baptist had gone before Him with his call to repentance, so the unsaved are in no condition today for the Gospel till *the Law* be applied to their hearts, for “by the law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). It is a waste of time to sow seed on ground which has never been plowed or spaded! To present the vicarious sacrifice of Christ to those whose dominant passion is to take their fill of sin, is to give that which is holy unto the dogs. What the unconverted need to hear about is the character of Him with whom they have to do, His claim upon them, His righteous demands, and the infinite enormity of disregarding Him and going on their own way.

*The nature of Christ's salvation* is woefully misrepresented by the present-day “evangelist.” He announces a Saviour from Hell, rather than a Saviour from *sin*. And that is why so many are fatally deceived, for there are multitudes who wish to escape the Lake of Fire who have no desire to be delivered from their carnality and worldliness. The very first thing said of Him in the New Testament is, “thou shalt call his name JESUS: for He shall save His people (*not* “from the wrath to come,” but) *from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). Christ is a Saviour for those realizing something of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, who fell the awful burden of it on their conscience, so loathe themselves for it, who long to be freed from its terrible dominion; and a Saviour *for no others*. Were He to “save from Hell” those who were still in love with sin, He would be the Minister of sin, condoning their wickedness and siding with them against God. What an unspeakably horrible and blasphemous thing with which to charge the Holy One!

Should the reader exclaim, *I was not conscious of the heinousness of sin nor bowed down with a sense of my guilt when Christ saved me*, then we unhesitatingly reply, Either you have never been saved at all, or you were not saved as early as you supposed. True, as the Christian grows in grace he has a clearer realization now what sin is—rebellion against God—and a deeper hatred of and sorrow for it: but to think that one may be saved by Christ whose conscience has never been smitten by the Spirit and whose heart has not been made contrite before God, is to imagine something which has no existence whatever in the realm of fact. “They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick” (Matt. 9:12): the only ones who really seek relief from the Great Physician are they that are *sick of sin*—who long to be delivered from its God-dishonouring works and its soul-defiling pollutions.

Inasmuch, then, as Christ's salvation is a salvation from sin—from the love of it, from its dominion, from its guile and penalty—then it necessarily follows that the first great task and the chief work of the evangelist is to preach upon SIN: to define what sin (as distinct from crime) really is, to show wherein its infinite enormity consists; to trace out its manifold workings in the heart; to indicate that nothing less than eternal punishment is its desert. Ah, and preaching upon *sin*—not merely uttering a few platitudes concerning it, but devoting sermon after sermon to explaining what sin is *in the light of God*—will not make him popular nor draw the crowds, will it? No, it will not, and knowing this, those who love the praise of men more than the approbation of God, and who value their salary above immortal souls, trim their sails accordingly. “But such preaching *will drive people away!*” We answer, Far better drive the people away by faithful preaching than *drive the Holy Spirit away* by unfaithfully pandering to the flesh.

*The terms of Christ's salvation are erroneously stated by the present-day evangelist. With very rare exceptions he tells his hearers that salvation is by grace and is received as a free gift; that Christ has done everything for the sinner, and nothing remains but for him to “believe”—to trust in the infinite merits of His blood. And so widely does this conception now prevail in “orthodox” circles, so frequently has it been dinned in their ears, so deeply has it taken root in their minds, that for one to now challenge it and denounce it as being so inadequate and one-sided as to be *deceptive and erroneous*, is for him to instantly court the stigma of being a heretic, and to be charged with dishonouring the finished work of Christ by inculcating salvation by works. Yet notwithstanding, the writer is quite prepared to run that risk.*

Salvation *is* by grace, by grace *alone*, for a fallen creature cannot possibly do anything to merit God's approval or earn His favour. Nevertheless, Divine grace is not exercised at the expense of holiness, for it never compromises with sin. It is also true that salvation is a free gift, but an *empty* hand must receive it, and not a hand which still tightly grasps the world! But it is *not* true that “Christ has done everything for the sinner.” He did not fill the sinner's belly with the husks which the swine eat and find them unable to satisfy. He has not turned the sinner's back on the far country, arisen, gone to the Father, and acknowledged his sins—those are acts *which the sinner himself must perform*. True, he will not be saved *for* the performance of them, yet it is equally true that he cannot be saved *without* the performance of them—any more than the prodigal could receive the Father's kiss and ring while he still remained at a guilty distance from Him!

Something more than “believing” is necessary to salvation. A heart that is steeled in rebellion against God cannot savingly believe: it must first be broken. It is written “except ye *repent*, ye shall likewise perish” (Luke 13:3). Repentance is just as essential as faith, yea, the latter cannot be without the former: “Repented not afterward, *that ye might believe*” (Matt. 21:32). The order is clearly enough laid down by Christ: “Repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15). Repentance is sorrowing for sin. Repentance is a heart-repudiation of sin. Repentance is a heart determination to forsake sin. And where there is true repentance grace is free to act, for the requirements of holiness are conserved when sin is renounced. Thus, it is the duty of the evangelist to cry “Let the wicked *forsake his way*, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD (from whom he departed in Adam), and He will have mercy upon him” (Isa 55:7). His task is to call on his hearers to lay down the weapons of their warfare against God, and then to sue for mercy through Christ.

*The way of salvation is falsely defined. In most instances the modern “evangelist” assures his congregation that all any sinner has to do in order to escape Hell and make sure of Heaven is to “receive Christ as his personal Saviour.” But such teaching is utterly misleading. No one can receive Christ as Saviour while he rejects Him as Lord. It is true the preacher adds that the one who accepts Christ should also surrender to Him as Lord, but he at once spoils it by asserting that though the convert fails to do so, nevertheless Heaven is sure to him. That is one of the Devil's lies. Only those who are spiritually blind would declare that Christ will save any who despise His authority and refuse His yoke: why, my reader, that would not be grace but a *disgrace*—charging Christ with placing a premium on lawlessness.*

It is in His office *of Lord* that Christ maintains God's honour, subserves His government, enforces His Law; and if the reader will turn to those passages—Luke 1:46, 47; Acts 5:31; 2 Peter 1:11, 2:20, 3:2,

3:18—where the two titles occur, he will find that it is always “Lord and Saviour,” and *not* “Saviour and Lord.” Therefore, those who have not bowed to Christ's sceptre and enthroned Him in their hearts and lives, and yet imagine that they are trusting in Him as their Saviour, *are deceived*, and unless God disillusion them they will go down to the everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa. 44:20). Christ is “the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*” (Heb. 5:9), but the attitude of those who submit not to His Lordship is “*we will not have this Man to reign over us*” (Luke 19:14). Pause then, my reader, and honestly face the question: are *you* subject to His will, are you sincerely endeavouring to keep His commandments?

Alas, alas, *God's* “way of salvation” is almost entirely unknown today. The *nature* of Christ's salvation is almost universally misunderstood, and the *terms* of His salvation misrepresented on every hand. The “Gospel” which is now being proclaimed is, in nine cases out of every ten, but *a perversion* of the Truth, and tens of thousands, assured they are bound for Heaven, are now hastening to Hell, as fast as time can take them. Things are far, *far worse* in Christendom than even the “pessimist” and the “alarmist” suppose. We are not a prophet, nor shall we indulge in any speculation of what Biblical prophecy forecasts—wiser men than the writer have often made fools of themselves by so doing. We are frank to say that we know not what God is about to do. Religious conditions were much worse, even in England, one hundred and fifty years ago. But this we greatly fear; unless God is pleased to grant a real revival, it will not be long ere “the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people” (Isa. 60:2), for the light of the true Gospel is rapidly disappearing. Modern “Evangelism” constitutes, in our judgment, the most solemn of all the “signs of the times.”

What must the people of God do in view of the existing situation? Ephesians 5:11 supplies the Divine answer: “*Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them,*” and everything *opposed to* the light of the Word *is* “darkness.” It is the bounden duty of every Christian to have no dealings with the “evangelistic” monstrosity of the day; to *withhold* all moral and financial support of the same, to attend none of their meetings, to circulate none of their tracts. Those preachers who tell sinners they may be saved *without* forsaking their idols, *without* repenting, *without* surrendering to the Lordship of Christ, are as erroneous and dangerous as others who insist that salvation is by works and that Heaven must be earned by our own efforts.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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January, 1938

### Private Prayer—Part 1

“But *thou*, when thou prayest, enter into *thy* closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward *thee* openly” (Matt. 6:6). Eight times in the space of this verse is the pronoun used in the singular number and the second person—a thing unique in all Scripture—as though to emphasize the indispensability, importance and value of private prayer. We are to pray in the closet as well as in the church: in fact if the former be neglected, it is not at all likely that the latter will be of much avail. He that is an attendee at the prayer meetings in order to be seen of men, and is not seen alone in his closet by God, is an hypocrite. Private prayer is the test of our sincerity, the index to our spirituality, the principle means of growing in grace. Private prayer is the one thing, above all others, that Satan seeks to prevent, for he knows full well that if he can succeed at this point, the Christian will fail at every other.

Alas, how remiss we have been, how sadly we have failed to discharge this duty, and what irreparable losers are we by this sinful neglect. Is it not high time that some of us heeded that word, “Consider your ways” (Hag. 1:5, 7)?! Shall this year witness a repetition of the sad failures of the past? Can we go on robbing God of His due, and our souls of the blessedness of communion with Him? The secret place of the Most High is one of vision, peace, joy. The closet is where strength is renewed, faith is quickened, graces are revived. It is not always the cares or pleasures of this world which are the hindering cause—some allow the discharge of public duties to prevent the performance of private ones. Beware, my reader, of being so busy in running from one meeting to another that personal dealings with God *in secret* are

crowded out. Some are so busily engaged in reading, and preparing sermons, that private communion with God is prevented.

Not a few are puzzling their brains over prophecy when they should be on their knees before God. “The Devil knows he is no loser, and the curious soul but a little gainer, if he can but persuade him to spend most of his precious time in pouring over the mysteries and hidden things of God. He that affects to read the Revelation of John more than his plain Epistles, or Daniel's prophecies more than David's Psalms, and is more busy about reconciling different Scriptures than he is about mortifying of unruly lusts, or is set more upon vain speculation than upon things that make for edification—he is not the man that is cut out for closet prayer. Such as affect sublime notions, obscure expressions, and are men of abstract conceits, are but a company of wise fools, that will never take any delight to be with God in a corner. O how holy, happy, heavenly, and humble might many men have been, had they but spent half the time in closet prayer that they have spent in searching after those things that are hard to be understood” (Thomas Brooks, Puritan).

The most eminent saints, in Old and New Testament times, applied themselves to private prayer. “And Abram planted a grove in Beersheba, and called there on the name of the LORD, the everlasting God” (Gen. 21:33). Why did Abram plant that grove, but that he could have a secluded spot where he might pour out his soul before his Maker. “And Isaac went out to meditate in the field at the eventide” (Gen. 24:63): the Hebrew word for “meditate” also signifies *to pray*, and is elsewhere rendered “commune” and “pray.” So, too, Jacob, Moses, Samuel, David, Elijah, Hezekiah, etc., were men whose private devotions are recorded in Holy Writ. Concerning Daniel, we read, “he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God” (6:10)—busy as he must have been, he allowed not public duties to crowd out private devotions.

Christ Himself, when upon earth, did much exercise Himself *in private prayer*: ponder such passages as Matthew 14:23, Mark 1:35, 6:46, Luke 5:16, where it will be found that He retired “into a mountain,” “into a solitary place,” “into the wilderness” that He might be alone with God, free from disturbance and distraction. But why was *He* so much in private prayer? Another has suggested the following reasons. First, to put a very high honour and value upon the same: to enhance and magnify this duty. Second, that He might avoid all shows and appearances of ostentation and popular applause: He was very shy of the mere shadow of pride and vainglory. Third, to set us such a blessed pattern and gracious example that we should not content ourselves with public prayers only, nor with family prayers only, but that we should also apply ourselves to *secret* prayer. Fourth, that He might approve Himself to our understandings and consciences to be a merciful and faithful High Priest “who ever liveth to make intercession for us.”

It is the exercising of ourselves in secret prayer which distinguishes us from hypocrites, who go through their religious exercises merely to be seen of men: Matthew 6:1, 2, 5, 16. The hypocrite places a far higher value upon the applause of his fellows than he does upon the approbation of his Maker. The praise of men is his meat and drink. The outstanding mark of a hypocrite is that he is one thing in public, but quite another in private. But the genuine Christian makes conscience of his prayer life, knows that God sees and hears him in secret, and cultivates communion with Him in the closet. The diligence with which we perform our *private* devotions is the criterion of our sincerity. We never read in Scripture that Pharaoh,

King Saul, Judas, Demas, Simon Magus, and the scribes and Pharisees ever poured out their souls before the Lord in secret! The hypocrite is more concerned about a good name than a good life, of a reputation for piety than a clear conscience—not so God's children. In secret we may more freely, fully, and safely, unbosom our souls to God than we can in the presence of our fellows. There is no danger in opening our heart and confessing in detail our vilest sins before God in a corner, but there might be a considerable hazard in doing so even before our fellow Christians. No one with wisdom and refinement would think of exposing his bodily ailments and diseases to any but his bosom friend or physician; neither should he make known his weaknesses and wickedness to any but to his best Friend, the Great Physician. There need be no restraint or reserve in confession when we are apart with God. It was when David was alone in the cave (see the Psalm heading) that he poured out his complaint and “showed Him his trouble” (Psa. 142:2). Observe carefully the repeated “every family *apart*” and “their wives *apart*” of Zechariah 12:12-14—to manifest not only the soundness of their sorrow, but to show their sincerity.

It is striking to note that God has often granted the freest communications of Himself to those who were before Him in secret. It was so with Moses on the mount, when Jehovah gave him the Law—and again when He gave him the pattern for the tabernacle. It was while Daniel was engaged in private prayer that God sent His angel to reveal to him the secrets of His counsel concerning the restoration of Jerusalem and the duration thereof even unto the Messiah (9:3, 21-27); as it was also during a season when he was alone before the Throne of Grace that God assured him he was “a man greatly beloved” (10:11, 19). It is in the closet that God usually bestows His sweetest and choicest blessings. Cornelius was highly commended and graciously rewarded upon the account of his private prayer (Acts 10:1-4). Peter was granted that wondrous vision concerning the Gentiles while praying alone (Acts 10:9-13).

Scripture records much to illustrate and demonstrate the great prevalence of private prayer. O the wonders that followed secret wrestling with God, the grand mercies that have been obtained, the judgments that have been diverted, the deliverances that have been secured! When Isaac was all alone entreating with God for a good wife, he met Rebekah (Gen. 24:63, 64). While Hezekiah was weeping and praying in private, God sent the prophet Isaiah to assure him that He would add unto his days fifteen years (Isa. 38:5). When Jonah was shut up in the whale's belly, he was delivered in answer to his supplication (2:1-10). O the power of private prayer: it has issued in the dead being raised to life—1 Kings 17:18-22, 2 Kings 4:32-35. May the Holy Spirit graciously use these considerations to stir up writer and reader.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1938

### THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

In our “Covenant” articles in the current issues it has been pointed out that one of the dominant characteristics of Christ's throne and kingdom, distinguishing it from all human and earthly ones, is its *everlastingness*. This particular feature is repeatedly emphasised in the Scriptures, in fact it is found in almost every passage where His kingdom is mentioned: see 2 Samuel 7:16; Isaiah 9:6, 7; Daniel 2:44; Luke 1:32, 33; 2 Peter 1:11; Revelation 11:15. Now this fact that Christ's throne is “forever and ever” at once refutes the idea of dispensationalists, whose assertions concerning Christ's kingdom are mainly confined (in most cases entirely so) to what they term His “millennial reign,” which lasts for a thousand years only. In the past the writer has himself been misled by this fantasy and erred in some of his earlier writings thereon: therefore we here humbly make this acknowledgment and renounce what we now believe is an error.

There is, however, one passage which appears to clash with those verses which affirm the eternity of Christ's kingdom, and which at the same time seems to offer some support to the pre-millennialists; and therefore a separate consideration of its contents is called for. “For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But everyone in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at His coming. Then cometh the end, when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power. For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet. The last enemy which shall be destroyed is death. For He (God) hath put all things under His (Christ's) feet. But when He saith all things are put under Him, it is manifest that

He is excepted, which did put all things under Him. And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor. 15: 22-28).

The above has been a favourite passage with errorists of various types: Unitarians, dispensationalists, and Universalists have all appealed to it in support of their fallacies and have interpreted, or rather misinterpreted, it according to their particular views. It therefore behooves us to approach it with double care and caution, praying that the Holy Spirit will graciously guide us in its exposition. That this passage presents difficulties in translation, punctuation, and interpretation is freely granted, but that they are far from being insuperable we shall seek to show. Our first inquiry must be, What bearing do these verses have upon *their context*—why should this reference to Christ's delivering up the kingdom and His being subject to the Father be introduced into a description of the resurrection? Then: what particular "end" is referred to? Which "kingdom" is it that Christ delivers up? And what "death" is destroyed?

We begin by considering the *scope* of our passage. There were some at Corinth who were saying "that there is no resurrection of the dead" (1 Cor. 15:2), and this chapter was written in refutation of that serious error. First, the Apostle pointed out that such a denial involved the repudiation of the Gospel itself and excluded all hope of salvation. He shows that if there be no resurrection, then Christ Himself is still in the grave (vv. 12-19). Then he proceeded to argue that since Christ is risen from the dead, His people also must be raised—the resurrection of the unsaved nowhere falls within the compass of *this* chapter. According to the great principles of the economy of redemption, the resurrection of the Head guaranteed the resurrection of Christ's mystical body. The security which the resurrection of Christ gives for the resurrection of His people, as here unfolded, is twofold: arising both from its procuring and from its final cause.

The resurrection of the holy dead rests on the procuring cause, or *what led up to the* resurrection of Christ Himself. This was His becoming obedient unto death in the room and stead of His people. As the sin of Adam produced not only his own death, but also the death of all who were in him as their federal head, so the obedience unto death of Christ procured not only His own resurrection, but will also produce the resurrection of all who are united to Him as their federal Head (vv. 20-23). Again; the resurrection of the saints rests on the final cause, or what the resurrection of Christ *led onto*, and this was that He rose *to reign* (vv. 24-28). All power in Heaven and earth has been given to Him for the express purpose of subduing all the enemies of Himself and His Father, and this secures the abolition of death in the glorious resurrection of all His people.

Before proceeding further we call attention to what we are now convinced is a most misleading mistake in the punctuation. But lest any should think we are acting in an arbitrary manner or taking unwarranted liberties with the text of the A.V., let it be pointed out, first, that in any version the punctuation is entirely a matter for the translators to decide (for the original Greek is not broken up into either paragraphs or verses, sentences or clauses), and this upon grammatical or doctrinal considerations, which leaves room for considerable difference of opinion; and second, what we are about to advance is so far from being novel and original, that many before us (from Theophylact to Herinsius, and down to our own times) have adopted this construction.

That to which we have referred in the above paragraph is the opening clause of verse 24, which we believe concludes verse 23; in other words “then cometh the end” does not begin a sentence, but completes one. Instead of connecting the “then cometh the end” with what follows in verses 24-26, and thereby understanding it to signify “then cometh the termination of all mundane affairs,” the end of the world's history, we regard it as meaning, “Then is the conclusion of *the resurrection*.” This is obviously the more natural construction, for it not only removes the necessity for the supplement “cometh” which has been inserted by the translators (there being nothing in the Greek to warrant it), but it also furnishes a more fitting completion to the sentence—“Christ the firstfruits—then they that are Christ's at His coming—then the end,” i.e., the grand completion of *the harvest*.

What follows in verses 24-26 introduces no new subject, but amplifies what has been said in verses 20-23. If verse 25 be placed in a parenthesis, and the supplementary (italicized) words of verse 26 be omitted, the sentence will be much simpler and more perspicuous. “When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority, and power (For He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet), the last enemy shall be destroyed—death.” Let it be steadily borne in mind that the great object throughout the whole of this chapter is to show the absolute security which *Christ's* resurrection gives for the resurrection of His *people*. That this subject is continued by the Apostle after the passage we are now considering is clear from verses 29-32, where further and supplementing arguments are advanced, namely the case of those who are baptised, and his own conduct.

Verses 24-26 are brought in here to assure the hearts and strengthen the confidence of believers. We understand their central purport to be something like this: There are many and powerful enemies of Christ seeking to oppose Him and destroy His people, but their efforts shall prove utterly futile, for being endowed with all power and authority from God Himself, Christ shall completely triumph over them all. Not only shall Christ reduce to impotency all human and demoniacal foes, but death itself shall be abolished. It is *death* which stands in the way of the full manifestation of Divine wisdom, power, and grace, in the complete holiness and happiness of the redeemed family. While their bodies remain in the grave Christ's triumph over sin and Satan is incomplete, and He does not see the entire fruit of “the travail of His soul,” in which He is to find full satisfaction. Death, then, is here called “the *last* enemy” because when the appointed time for the resurrection arrives *it alone* stands in the way of the consummation of Christ's mighty work of full and eternal deliverance.

A right understanding, then, of verses 24-26 definitely fixes the meaning of “then the end,” proving it belongs to verse 23. Verses 24-26 illustrate and demonstrate that at the coming of Christ there will be an end or completion of the resurrection: it is to be by the destruction of the last enemy—death. There will be no more resurrection (of saints) after the coming of Christ, for there will be no more to die, and so no more to be raised. It will then be fully evidenced that Christ has subdued all foes unto Himself, which was the grand purpose for which the Father delegated all power unto the Redeemer. He must reign till all His enemies are put under His feet, for He rose again for this purpose; wherefore it follows that the last enemy—death, must be destroyed, and when it is, the resurrection of the saints must have come to “the end”!

For a closer consideration of the details of these verses we must first ascertain the precise signification of

“When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God.” Now it is self-evident that no explanation of those words can possibly be true which asserts that the throne of Christ's glory shall ever be vacated. Shall Christ lay down the reward which the Father gave Him for His unspeakable humiliation and obedience unto death? Surely His recompense is not to cease as soon as He has completed His great commission—destroying the works of Satan and subduing His Father's foes. Shall He cease to be Lord and King at the very time when every knee begins to bow to Him and every tongue confesses His name? What! Are the saints to be crowned with an *eternal* reward, and the King of saints with only a *temporary* one? Will the redeemed “reign forever and ever” (Rev. 22:3) and the Redeemer for only a thousand years?

If it be strange that pre-millenarians interpret this clause as the ending of Christ's millennial kingdom, it is stranger still that some post-millenarians understand by it the termination of His mediatorial kingdom, for the perpetuity of *that is* affirmed again and again in Scripture. But if it refer to neither of them, what other alternative remains? The “kingdom” or dominion of Christ is a threefold one. First, that which belongs to Him as the second Person of the Godhead, namely, His absolute authority over all creatures. Second, that which pertains to Him as the incarnate Son, the Mediator, namely, His rule over His own people. Third, that to which He was exalted after His resurrection, when “all power was given Him in Heaven and earth,” namely, His dominion over all His *enemies*, so that He might triumphantly conclude the work of redemption by subjugating every opposing force. It is the *third* which 1 Corinthians 15:24 has reference to.

The duties of a king may be summed up in these two things: to rule righteously over his subjects, to subdue his and their enemies. The subjugation of all who oppose is an essential part of *Christ's* reign. This He accomplishes now by setting bounds to their power, making even their wrath to praise Him; and ultimately by reducing them to complete impotency when sentence of punishment is passed upon them and they are all securely and eternally shut up in their own place. All things fell by sin into an enmity against God and the salvation of the Church. Christ as the Vice-regent of the Father has received commission for the removal of this enmity and the destruction of all His gainsayers. This He was to variously and gradually accomplish in the exercise of all His offices. He did so at the Cross by the exercise of His priesthood, when, He (judicially) removed the enmity between God and His people (Eph. 2:14-16). He does so now by the exercise of His prophetic office, in effectually causing the Gospel to experimentally reconcile His people to God (Psa. 110:2, 3). He will yet do so by the exercise of His kingship, when He destroys the finally impenitent.

Christ has received commission to put down that revolt which commenced in the sin of angels, and has been carried on through the Fall of man, with all its fearful consequences, so that the Divine supremacy shall again be effectually manifested and universally acknowledged. In the universe there is now a kingdom of darkness (Matt. 12:26 and Col. 1:13) as well as a kingdom of light ; there is “the throne of iniquity” (Psa. 94:20), as well as the throne of righteousness. But this state of things cannot be permitted to continue forever. True, God had a wise end in permitting it, but He shall in His own good time end it. This work has been entrusted to Christ, partly as a reward or His humiliation, partly for the furtherance of His redemptive work. This, as we have said above, is accomplished by Him through a twofold process: by converting some of the rebels into loyal subjects; by depriving the others of all power to work any further evil. The finalization of the one shall be seen when Christ presents the Church to Himself “a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle” (Eph. 5:27); the finalization of the other will be demonstrated when

Revelation 19:11 to 20:15 is fulfilled.

There is, then, a “kingdom” which has been usurped by God's enemies, and which Christ has been appointed to restore unto Him. In order to His successful discharge of this appointment, Christ has been endowed with unlimited power: see Psalms 2:6-9, 45:3-6; Acts 2:36 and 5:31; Ephesians 1:20, 21; Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:18-22. This recovery by Christ of that kingdom usurped by Satan and his hosts, is intimated in our passage by “when He shall have *delivered up* the kingdom to God, “for the same Greek word is found in such verses as Matthew 19:17; 24:9; Acts 3:13; Romans 8:32, where it is an assigning over to judicial powers *for judgment*. This enables us to perceive clearly *what* kingdom it is which Christ renders to the Father; it is not the resignation of His own Lordship, but the arresting of His foes in order to their eternal incarceration in the Lake of Fire.

We trust it has been made quite plain to the reader that the central thought of 1 Corinthians 15:22-26 is that the resurrection of Christ Himself is connected with such a state of power and authority as is at once sufficient for securing the resurrection of all who are savingly connected with Him. That there are powerful adversaries at work seeking to prevent this seems clearly implied, but that their efforts shall prove utterly vain is here emphatically declared. The abolition of death will be the crowning act of Christ's triumph over Satan and his hosts. The reason why the Apostle brought in the parenthesis of verse 25 was to explain *how* Christ is to recover unto God the usurped kingdom—by putting down all hostile forces. He quotes from Psalm 110:1, “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand,” which means that at His ascension Christ was invested with the government of the universe; “until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool” promised Him full victory over them, and that promise must be fulfilled. Verses 27, 28 we leave for our next article on the kingdom of Christ in the February issue.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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January, 1938

### **GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS.**

“Thy Word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee” (Psa. 119:11). The duty of God's children is to hide His Word in their hearts, and in so doing there must be a right end; their knowledge of it and delight in it is to be directed *to practice*.

One duty and necessary practice of God's children is to hide the Word in their hearts. See it confirmed by a Scripture or two: “This book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night” (Josh. 1:8); “Receive, I pray thee, the law from His mouth, and lay up His words in thy heart” (Job 22:22). Lay up His words as we would do choice things, that they may not be *lost*; and lay them up as a treasure to be *used* upon all occasions. In the *heart* let them not swim in the brain or memory only, but let the affections be moved therewith, “Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (Col. 3:16): be so diligent in the study of the Scripture that it may become familiar with us, by frequent hearing, reading, meditating, conferring about it. As a stranger, let it not stand at the door, but receive it into an inner room; be as familiar as those that dwell with you. God complaineth of His people “I have written to him [Ephraim] the great things of My Law, but they were counted as a strange thing” (Hosea 8:12). To be strangers to the Word of God, and little conversant in it, is a great evil.

What is it to hide the Word in our hearts? (1) To understand it, to get a competent knowledge of it; we take in things into the soul by the understanding: “When wisdom entereth into thine heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto thy soul” (Prov. 2:10). (2) When it is assented unto by faith. The Word is settled in the heart

by faith, otherwise it soon vanisheth: “The Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it “ (Heb. 4:2). (3) When it is kindly entertained. Christ complained “Ye seek to kill Me, because My Word hath no place in you” (John 8:37). Men are so possessed with lust and prejudice, that there is no room for Christ's Word. Though it break in upon the heart with evidence and power, yet it is not entertained there but cast out again as an unwelcome guest. (4) When it is deeply rooted. Many men have flashes for a time: their affections may be much aloft, and they may have great elevations of joy, but no sound grace: ”ye rejoiced in his light *for a season*” (John 5:35). The Word must be settled into a standing affection, if we would have comfort and profit from it. We read of “The engrafted Word” (James 1:21): till there be the root of the matter in us, in vain do we expect fruit.

The reasons why this is one great duty and practice of the saints to hide the Word in their heart are two: first, that we may have it *ready for our use*. We lay up principles that we may lay them out upon all occasions. When the Word is hidden in the heart, it will be ready to break out in the tongue and practice, and be forthcoming to direct us in every duty and exigency. When persons run to the market for every pennyworth, it doth not become good housekeepers. To be seeking of comforts when we should use them, or to run to a book, is not so blessed as to hide it in the heart. “A good scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of Heaven . . . bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old” (Matt. 13:52). He hath not only this year's growth but the last year's gathering (for so is the allusion): he hath not only from hand to mouth, but a good stock by him. So should it be with the Christian, which is a very great advantage.

First, it will prevent vain thoughts. Why is evil so ready and present with us? Because our stock of spiritual knowledge is so small. A man that hath a pocket with more brass farthings than pieces of silver, will more readily draw out farthings than shillings; his stock is greater. So vain thoughts will be more ready with us, unless the Word dwell richly in our hearts. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things” (Matt. 12:35). The workings of our spirits are as our treasure and stock. The mind works upon what it finds in itself, as a mill grinds whatever is put into it—chaff or corn. Therefore, if we would prevent evil thoughts and musings of vanity all the day long, we must hide the Word in our hearts.

Second, when you are alone and without outward helps, your hearts will furnish you with matters of counsel, or comfort, or reproof: “My reins instruct me in the night season” (Psa. 16:7). When we are alone, and there is a veil of darkness drawn upon the world, and we have not the benefit of a Bible, a minister, or Christian friends, our reins will instruct us; we may draw out of our heart that which will be for our refreshing. *A Christian is to be a walking Bible*: to have a good stock and treasure in himself.

Third, it will supply us in prayer. Barrenness and leanness of soul is a very great defect, which God's children often complain of. One great reason is because the Word of God does not dwell plenteously in them. If the heart were often exercised in the Word, the promises would hold up our hearts in prayer, enlarge our affections, and we should be better able to pour out our spirits before Him. “My heart is inditing a good matter” (Psa. 45:1). What follows? “My tongue is the pen of a ready writer.” When the heart is full, the tongue will be loosed and speak freely. What is the reason we are so dumb and tongued in prayer? Because the heart is so barren. When the spring is dry, there will be little water in the stream. “Take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God,” then follows “praying with all

supplication” (Eph. 6:17, 18). When we have a good store of the Word it will burst out in prayer,

Fourth, it will be a great help to us in all our affairs. Proverbs 6:21, 22, speaking of the precepts of God, “bind them upon thy heart; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; when thou awakest it shall talk with thee.” Upon all occasions the Word will be ready to cast in seasonable thoughts. When we awake, our first thoughts in the morning will begin with God, to season the heart all the day; and as we are about our business, the Word will hold our hearts in the fear of God; and when we sleep, it will guard us from vain dreams and imaginations. In a wicked man sin engrosses all his thoughts: it employs him all the day, plays in his fancy all the night; it solicits him first in the morning, because he is a stranger to the Word of God. But a man that is a Bible to himself, the Word will ever be upon him, urging him to duty, restraining him from sin, directing him in his ways.

Fifth, it is a great relief against temptations to have the Word ready. The Word is called “The Sword of the Spirit.” In spiritual conflicts there is none like it. Those that ride abroad in time of danger will not be without a sword. We are in danger, and had need handle the Sword of the Spirit. The more ready the Scripture is with us, the greater advantage in our conflicts and temptations. When the Devil came to assault Christ, He had Scripture ready for him, whereby He overcame the tempter. The door is barred upon Satan, and he cannot find such easy entrance, when the Word is hid in our hearts, and made use of pertinently. “I write to you, young men, because ye are strong.” Wherein lies their strength? “And the Word of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the wicked one” (1 John 2:14). O it is a great advantage when we have the Word not only *by* us, but *in* us, engrafted in the heart! When it is present with us, we are more able to resist the attacks of Satan. Either a man forgets the Word or has lost his affections to it, before he can be drawn to sin,

Sixth, it is a great relief in afflictions. Our fainting in trouble come from ignorance or forgetfulness: “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of Him” (Heb. 12:5). If we had a herb growing in our garden that would ease our smart, what, are we the better if we know it not? There is no malady but what has its remedy in the Word. To have a comfort ready is a great relief.

Seventh, it makes our conference and conversation with others more gracious. “Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh” (Matt. 12:34). When we have a great deal of hidden treasure in the soul it will get out at the tongue, for there is a quick intercourse between the heart and the tongue. The tap runs according to the liquor wherewith the vessel is filled. Come to men of an unsavory spirit, pierce them, broach them, give them occasion again and again for discourse, and you get nothing but frothy communication from them and vain talk. But now a man that has stored his heart with the Word is ever and anon interposing for God. Like a bottle filled with wine, he must have vent. As the Spouse's lips are said to “drop as honeycombs,” they are ever putting forth savoury expressions in their converse with others.

Before I go to the second reason, let me anticipate an objection. Is not this to take from the Spirit and give it to the Word? And that to the Word not as written in God's book, but as it is in our hearts Will not this be to ascribe all to created grace? I answer (1) Without question, it is the office of the Spirit to bring things to

our remembrance, and the great help He gives is by suggesting such passages as may be of most seasonable relief to the soul in temptations, in prayer, and in business (John 14:16). But what is ascribed to the Scriptures and grace is not to the robbing of the Spirit, for the Scripture is of *His* inditing, and grace is of *His* working; yea, we still reserve the chief honour to the Holy Spirit, for He not only works grace, but works by grace. He not only indites the Scripture, but operates by it; it is He that quickens prayer, and therefore it is ill trusting to our own understanding and memory, for it is the Spirit that is the great Remembrancer, and impresses upon the mind seasonable thoughts.

(2) I grant further, the children of God are subject to much forgetfulness of the Truth that is impressed upon their hearts; partly through the present cloud and mist which the temptation raiseth. The Psalmist had truths enough to support him, yet he said, “Until I went into the sanctuary of God, I was foolish and ignorant; I was as a beast before Thee” (73:17, 22). There is so much dullness upon the children of God that they cannot remember seasonable thoughts; as Hagar had a fountain by her, yet she did not see it till God opened her eyes (Gen. 21). So under temptation all are benighted, and the light that is in the understanding is obscured. And partly through the little sense they have for the present need of the comforts which the Word propounds; few are so wise as to lay up for a bad year. And partly through sloth and negligence, being taken up with other things. It is possible sometimes that we may be guided by the Spirit, and act right merely by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, without any interposing and concurrence of our own understandings as John 12:13 compared with verse 16:—“They took branches of palm trees and went forth to meet Him; and cried, Hosanna, blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord . . . these things understood not His disciples at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then remembered they that these things *were written of Him*, and that they had done these things unto Him.” Mark they were guided by the Spirit to do that they knew not for the present.

(3) The Holy Spirit makes use of a sanctified memory, bringing Scripture to our remembrance as we have need. It is made their act, because the Holy Spirit made use of their memories: they “remembered that it was written, The zeal of Thine house hath eaten Me up” (John 2:17). They that neglect to search and hide the Word in their hearts, have not such seasonable refreshment; for God works more strongly with the strongest graces; there where there is the greater receptivity, there is the greater influence; those that are ignorant cannot expect such help as those having the Word dwelling richly in them.

The second reason is, therefore should we hide the Word in our hearts, because God doth so in the work of conversion: “I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts” (Heb. 8:10). The mind is compared to tables of stone, and the heart to the ark; and so this is required of us to “write them upon the table of our heart” (Prov. 7:3). How doth this follow? because *God* does in conversion, therefore it is *our* duty? I answer (1) God requires what He works to show the creature's duty, as well as the power of His own grace. God is to convert, yet do *you* turn; circumcise your heart and I will circumcise; mortify your members, and yet “If ye through the Spirit do mortify. “He gives and *requires*, to engage the subserviency of our endeavours, and to make us sensible of our obligation. (2) This follows because this work must be gone over and over that it may be more explicit. We must revive the work, and put a fresh copy of the Law into our hearts, to keep the old work a-foot.—A.W.P.

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### **PREACHING AS WE WALK.**

The story is told of St. Francis of Assisi that he once stepped down into the cloisters of his monastery, and, laying his hand on the shoulder of a young monk, said, “Brother, let us go down into the town and preach.”

The venerable father and the young monk set out together. They wandered down the principal streets and wound their way through alleys and lanes, and even to the outskirts of the town and the village beyond, until they eventually found themselves back at the monastery.

Then inquired the young monk, “Father, when shall we begin to preach?”

The father looked down kindly and said:

“My child, we have been preaching; we were preaching while we were walking. We have been seen—looked at; our behaviour has been remarked upon, and so we have delivered a morning sermon. Ah! my son, it is of no use that we walk anywhere to preach unless we preach as we walk.”

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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February, 1938

### **Private Prayer—Conclusion**

“My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee, and will look up” (Psa. 5:3). Let this be our resolve, and, so long as we are spared, our practice, throughout the year we have just entered. It is both our wisdom and our duty to thus begin each day with God. “Should not a people seek unto the Lord their God?” Surely the light of nature dictates that we ought to do so, while the light of the Gospel affords us ample instruction and encouragement for the same. When He says to us “Seek ye My face,” should not our hearts answer as to One we love, “Thy face, LORD, will we seek” (Psa. 27:8)? But suppose our hearts have grown cold, and we have wickedly strayed from Him? Well, when He says “Return ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings,” should we not readily reply, “Behold, we come unto Thee, for Thou art the LORD our God” (Jer. 3:22)?

O my reader, is there not much that we need to say to the Lord our God, the One whom we serve? How many and important are the concerns which lie between us and Him. We are constantly dependent upon Him—all our expectation is from Him. Is not all our happiness for time and eternity bound up in His favour? Have we not need to seek His approbation—to seek Him with all our hearts; to beg as for our very lives that He will lift up the light of His countenance upon us, to plead Christ's righteousness as that through which alone we can hope to obtain God's lovingkindness (Psa. 71:16)?! Are we not conscious that we have deeply offended the Lord our God by our numerous and grievous sins, and have contracted defilement thereby? Should we not confess our folly and seek forgiveness and cleansing by the blood of Christ? Have we not received innumerable bounties and blessings from Him—must we not acknowledge

the same, and return thanks and praise? Yes, prayer is the very least we can offer unto God.

Let us now make a few suggestions upon how this duty is to be performed. First, *reverently*. In all our approaches to God we should duly consider His exalted majesty and ineffable holiness, and humble ourselves before Him as Abraham did (Gen. 18:27). The word “*direct* my prayer unto Thee” (Psa. 5:3) signifies a fixedness of thought or close application of the mind. We need to set about the discharge of this duty solemnly, as those who have at heart something of great importance which we dare not trifle with. When we come before the Throne of Grace and address the Most High, we must not offer the sacrifice of fools: “be not rash with thy mouth, and let not thine heart be hasty to utter anything before God” (Eccl. 5:2). He that shoots an arrow at a mark *directs* it with a steady hand and fixed eye—so when engaging the heart to approach unto God, it must be disengaged from everything else. O to be able to say, “My heart is *fixed*, O God” (Psa. 57:7). See to it that the awe of God's greatness be upon your soul together with a deep sense of your utter unworthiness.

Second, *sincerely*. We cannot be too strongly or too frequently warned against that mere external worship to which we are so constantly prone, and which is the bane of all spiritual good. Of old, Israel was charged with making mention of God's name, “but *not in truth*” (Isa. 48:1). The desire of our heart must prompt and correspond to the petitions we present. How we need to beg God that this may be wrought into our spirits. How we need to search our hearts and see to it that we mean what we say, for “The LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh His name in vain” (Exo. 20:7). Form the habit of challenging yourself by inquiring, Am I consistent with myself when I invoke God, or do I think I can impose upon Him with hypocrisy. “The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon Him, to all that call upon Him *in truth*” (Psa. 145:18). As an aid to this, ponder the high value of those spiritual things you ask for—your deep need of them—and inquire, Do I really desire the same?

Third, *submissively*—that is, subserviently to God's glory and our own highest good. Our petitions should ever be presented with the provision, “If it be Thy will.” We are ever prone to act amiss and often know not “what manner of spirit we are of” (Luke 9:55). The prayer of faith includes submission as truly as it does confidence, for if the latter be without the former, it is presumption—and not faith. To pray in faith is not to ask in the certain belief that God will give us what we ask for, but rather that He will grant us what is wisest and best. If we knew assuredly beforehand that God would certainly give us the very things we ask for, we would have reason to be afraid to pray, for often we desire things which would prove a curse if we got them! Our wisdom as well as our duty is to pray, conditionally and submissively. We must bow before God's sovereignty.

Fourth, *confidently*. There are some men, who because of their high station or known sternness towards all inferiors, we would be afraid to approach. And because we have none to introduce and speak a good word for us, we would therefore abandon the idea of speaking to them. But there is no reason why a believer should be discouraged from speaking to God—nay, He bids us “come boldly unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy”: (Heb. 4:16). Let not, then, a sense of God's greatness or holiness, nor a realization of your own entire unworthiness, deter you. Such are God's compassions unto humble supplicants that even His terror should not make them afraid. It is directly against His revealed will that His people should frighten themselves thus. He would have them encourage themselves as children: “for

ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). By that very spirit of adoption we were brought into the nearness, freedom, and liberty of the children of God, and though we are still full of sin, yet, “we have an Advocate with the Father” (1 John 2:1).

Fifth, *fervently*. David said, “I entreated Thy favour with my whole heart” (Psa. 119:58). It is not sufficient that our tongues babble out a mere form—our hearts must be in this work—we are to be more concerned about the exercise of our affections than in the selection of our words. It is to be feared that we pray far more from our memories than our consciences. But let it be pointed out that fervency in prayer is *not* a working up of our animal spirits so that there is shouting and shaking of the body—actors work themselves up into a great heat to move their audience, and lawyers to impress a judge. Fervency is expressed in Scripture as a calling upon the name of the Lord (Rom. 10:13), a stretching out the hands toward Him (Job 11:13), a following hard after Him (Psa. 63:8), a laying hold of Him (Isa. 64:7), a pouring out the heart before Him (Psa. 62:8). It is a striving in prayer (Rom. 15:30). God hates lukewarmness. Note Daniel's intensity: 9:19. David compared his prayers to “incense” (Psa. 141:2), and no incense was offered without *fire*!

Let us now anticipate an objection. I would be often in praying before God, but sin has so much power over me that it severs communion, and utterly quenches the spirit of prayer in my heart—I feel so polluted that it would be a mockery for me to appear before the thrice holy God. Ah, but God's hearing of our prayers does not depend upon our sanctity—but upon Christ's mediation: “I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for Mine holy name's sake” (Ezek. 36:22). It is not because of what Christians are in themselves, but because of what they are in Christ, that God responds to their requests: “to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God *by Jesus Christ*” (1 Peter 2:5). When God answers our petitions it is not for our sakes, nor for our prayers' sake, but for His Son's sake: see Ephesians 4:32. Seek to remember, my distressed brethren, that you are a member of the mystical body of Christ, and as Luther said, “What man will cut off his nose because there is filth in it?”

The more desperate be our case, the greater is our need to pray: if grace in us be weak, the continued neglect of prayer will make it weaker. If our corruptions be strong, the omission of prayer will make them stronger. Sins which are bewailed never hinder the access and success of our petitions. Jonah was a man full of sinful passions, yet *his* prayers prevailed with God: (2:1, 2, 7, 10). David said, “iniquities prevail against me,” yet he at once added, “as for our transgressions, Thou shalt purge them away” (Psa. 65:3). On another occasion he said, “The LORD hath heard the *voice* of my weeping” (Psa. 6:8)—his very tears prayed! God hears the sighs and groanings of those who cannot put them into words. Then encourage yourself by the greatness of God's mercy, His covenant promises, His Fatherhood, and by the answers you have received in the past.—A.W.P.

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### THE KINGDOM OF CHRIST.

Another article seems to be required for the further elucidation and amplification of what has already been advanced in our exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:22-28, the more so as we have yet said nothing upon the last two verses. We have endeavoured to show that the contents of this passage introduce nothing that is not strictly pertinent to the theme which the Apostle is discussing in this chapter, both before verse 22 and after verse 28—namely, the resurrection of the saints. Instead, as we have seen, it supplies a striking and valuable contribution to that important subject, by furnishing proof that there is no possibility of any enemy of Christ and His people being able to prevent that glorious event. Furthermore, it has been shown that the whole passage is one connected and consistent whole, and not a number of individual statements having little or nothing in common.

In verse 22 the assertion is made that “in Christ shall all be made alive.” This at once intimates that the elect only are in view, for the non-elect never were and never will be in Christ—compare verses 45-47, where further contrasts between the first and last Adam are in view. In verse 23 the statement made in the second half of verse 22 is particularized: “But every man (every one) in his own order.” The Head and His members are not made alive simultaneously. No, in this, as in all things, Christ has the pre-eminence, consequently there is an interval between “Christ the firstfruits”—which not only denotes *precedence*, but *pledge* of the future harvest. “Afterward (Greek, “then”) they which are Christ's (again showing that only the holy dead are here in view) at His coming.” But will there not be the raising of other believers at a still later period: no, for “*then the end*”—the promise in verse 22 is now completely made good.

Two important questions are naturally raised by the contents of verses 22, 23: how and when shall Christ bring this to pass? Each is answered in what follows. “For He (God) hath put all things under His (Christ's) feet” (v. 27). This is only another way of saying that God has exalted the crucified but risen Redeemer to the place of supreme authority and power—carefully compare Ephesians 1:19-23 and observe the same words in verse 22. God has not only entrusted unto the Mediator the saving of His own people, but the subduing of all His enemies—note the double claim He makes in John 17:2. This is the answer to His prayer, “Father, glorify Thy Son, that Thy Son also may glorify Thee” (John 17:1). In the new creation, from beginning to end, “all things” are of the Father, yet “all things” are by Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 8:6).

How glorious is the Christ of God! What dignity, majesty, and might are His! Alas, how vastly different is that wretched caricature presented from the modern pulpit, wherein Christ is referred to as *needing* the help of His puny creatures in order to bring His work to a successful conclusion. How perversely man inverts the Divine order: it is we who are in sore need of *His* help, and not He of *ours*. Christ has received commission from the Father, to “destroy the works of the Devil” (1 John 3:8): not only to bring good out of all the evil which sin has created, but also to bring to an end all the confusion and dishonour to God which Satan has brought into the universe. Therefore, “He must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:25).

“When He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father”—that is, the kingdom which Satan has usurped, the kingdom of darkness—“when He shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power”—which explains the previous clause, meaning when He shall have subdued every creature and force which is hostile to God; “the last enemy shall be destroyed—death.” Thus the two “whens” of verse 24 correspond to the two “thens” of verse 23—we showed last month that the closing clause of verse 24 (in the A.V.) completes verse 23, while the destruction of death answers to, confirms the fact, that “the end” (of the resurrection of the saints) has come. If any shadow of doubt remains upon this point of our interpretation, verse 54 completely removes it: “So *when* this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, *then* shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory,” for “death” is “destroyed.”

What has just been pointed out not only refutes the Pre-millennial interpretation of this particular passage, but it seems to completely overthrow their entire position. Their contention is, first, that Christ does not receive the kingdom until His second advent—arguing that He is now seated on the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21), and that He will not occupy His own throne (Matt. 25:31) until the beginning of the Millennium. Second, that instead of all God's enemies being completely and finally subdued at the time of Christ's coming, this will not occur till after the Millennium is over—appealing to Revelation 20:7-10 to bolster up their theory. Third, most of them insist that the coming of Christ and His raising the Church take place before the “tribulation period,” and that it is not until several years later He makes alive those who were slain by “the antichrist.” A worse turning of things upside down could scarcely be imagined—alas that in the past we ourselves have been guilty of it.

As we have shown, so far from the second advent of Christ being the time when His kingdom is inaugurated and that the putting forth of His mighty power for the subduing of His enemies is commenced,

it is then that He delivers up the kingdom to the Father because every foe *has* been reduced to a state of utter impotency—it is quite clear from Luke 19:13 that Christ went to Heaven “to receive for Himself a kingdom and to return,” and *not* to return and then receive a kingdom! Again—so far from Christ's subjugation of His enemies taking place at a date long after His second coming, our passage places it before, or at least makes it to synchronize with, the destruction of death, the last enemy—note the same order in Matthew 13:1, 41-43. And the emphatic and unequivocal statements at the close of 1 Corinthians 15:24, “then cometh the end” entirely excludes all idea of any saints being raised after Christ's coming.

Far more serious is the view taken by many of the closing portion of our passage. Those who have regarded the “Then (cometh) the end” as referring to the end of time, the termination of this world, consider verses 27, 28 as illustrative of Christ's then delivering of the kingdom to the Father, following which the Son is to become in some new way subject to the Father—thus does one error logically involve and lead up to another. Whatever be the meaning of verse 28 we may rest fully assured that there is nothing in it which in anywise clashes with the plain teaching of other Scriptures, and therefore no interpretation of it can be valid which supposes that Christ will yet suffer a second humiliation, or cease to be an Object of worship. Most certainly there is nothing in it which casts the slightest cloud upon the Godhead of the Redeemer, or intimates that the second Person in the Trinity is inferior to the First. Equally certain is it that there can be nothing in the verse which signifies Christ will ever abdicate His mediatorial throne.

Obviously, we must turn to the context for a right understanding of verses 27, 28. Nor does that present the slightest difficulty so far as the ascertaining of its leading thought be concerned: the man Christ Jesus possesses such authority and power that nothing can possibly prevent His raising in Glory the whole of His people: the risen Christ has been invested with such majesty and might that no hostile power can stand before Him. The dominion of Christ is a supreme, universal, and uncontrollable one, so far as creatures are concerned; yet it is a subordinate one so far as essential Deity is concerned. Now the purpose and purport of verses 27, 28 is to illustrate *the delegated character of* that dominion and authority, in the exercise of which the Son brings back the kingdom to the Father by putting down all opposing rule. This brings before us a subject of no small importance.

The expression “when He shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father” implies that, in some sense, the kingdom has *departed* from the Father. But there is a real sense in which the kingdom never has departed, and never can depart, from the Father. His *right* to reign and His *power* to assert that right, are indubitable and infinite, immutable and eternal. There is no being, and there is no event, that is or can be beyond His control; ay, there is no being nor event which shall not be made ultimately to subserve the purpose of His wise and righteous government. Yet it is an undeniable fact that a considerable portion of His creatures have renounced their allegiance, and have individually, and collectively, set themselves in opposition to Him, refusing to obey His holy, righteous, and good laws, and to yield their co-operation in working out the wise and- benevolent designs of His administration. To this rebel portion of God's subjects belong the whole of the fallen angels, and the whole too of fallen men, with the exception of those who are reclaimed by the Son.

“An important portion of God's dominions is in a state of revolt. The standard of rebellion, first erected on

the very battlements of Heaven, has since been erected on earth; and for nearly six thousand years its inhabitants almost with one consent, have rallied around it, scornfully rejecting the claims of their Maker, and obstinately refusing to return to their allegiance, and acknowledge Him as their rightful King. Earth and Hell are leagued in one grand conspiracy against the throne of the Most High. Christ is exalted to the throne to put down these enemies and opposing powers, and thus recover the kingdom from the usurpers” (Van Valkenburgh).

Now the way in which this usurped kingdom is restored to the Father is Christ's putting down of all opposing rule and power. All power, whether diabolical or human, exercised by individuals, or embodied in institutions, or order of things, must be overthrown, so that this kingdom will be brought back to Him whose absolute right it is to reign in and over us. The “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12) must be dethroned—stripped of their power to deceive and destroy. Everything inimical must be destroyed by the God-man in His administration of that kingdom entrusted to Him by the Father. True, these all “make war with the Lamb,” but “the Lamb shall overcome them, *for* He is Lord of lords and King of kings” (Rev. 17:14). He will “break them with a rod of iron, and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel” (Psa. 2:9). Satan with his rebel hosts, and those of our race who clung to his dominion, shall be cast into the Lake of Fire.

The object of verses 27, 28 is to show us that the power Christ wields over His enemies is a *delegated* one. Christ's authority is not distinct from the Divine: rather is it the exercise of that power which is common to the Father and the Son as Divine Persons; just like, “As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:26). It is as though the Apostle said, in referring to Psalm 110, I stated that Christ must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet (1 Cor. 15:25), yet let me now remind you it is *Jehovah* who secures this, as the first verse of that Psalm affirms. “For He hath put all things under His feet” (v. 27) is a quotation from Psalm 8:6, as a further corroboration of the truth that it is *Jehovah* who gave the Mediator dominion over all His creatures.

Let it be remarked that this ancient oracle is again quoted by our Apostle in Hebrews 2. That which fills us with wonderment in Psalm 8 is that it is of *man* this is predicated. That Psalm begins by contemplating the ineffable majesty of Jehovah: “O LORD, our Lord, how excellent is Thy name in all the earth! Who hast set Thy glory above the heavens” (v. 1). Next he asks “What is man that THOU art mindful of *him*? . . . for Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels” (vv. 4, 5). Then he exclaims “Thou madest him to have *dominion over* the works of Thy hands; *Thou* hast put all things under his feet” (v. 6). After quoting the whole of this passage, the Apostle says, “But now we see not yet all things put under him: but we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, *crowned* with glory and honour” (Heb. 2:8, 9)—thereby proving that the unlimited power Christ is now wielding is the power *of God*.

“But when He saith, All things are put under Him, it is manifest that He is excepted, which did put all things under Him” (1 Cor. 15:27). When in the 8th Psalm it is said that Jehovah subjected all things to man, it is very obvious that He who should subject them to Him—who gave supremacy to Him, sovereignty over them—does not, in so doing, denude Himself of His own power or authority: that power necessarily remains supreme. As the Apostle here declares, “it is manifest that He is excepted.” And *how*

is it “manifest”? Why, because a *delegated* authority necessarily implies a supremacy in Him who confers it. The Father will be greater than the Mediator: Christ's kingdom, though in reference to creatures, supreme, is, in reference to essential Deity, delegated; and this statement is made that it may be obvious that all things are of God.

“And when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shalt the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him, that God may be all in all” (v. 28). Yet let it be said very emphatically that this subjection of the Son to the Father *is no new thing* which exclusively characterizes that order of things which shalt obtain upon His restoring of the usurped kingdom. No, no—the Father's word to the Son, “Thy throne O God, is forever and ever” (Heb. 1:8) is not to be rescinded in the eternal state. The subjection of the Son to the Father marks the whole mediatorial economy. “That economy, throughout proceeds on the principle that, while essentially the Son and Spirit are equal with the Father, being one with Him in the economy of grace, They are subordinate to the Father, who sustains the majesty of Divinity. The Father is greater than They. He sends, They come; He appoints, and They execute. All things are *of Him by Them*” (John Brown).

The principal design of verse 28, then, is to teach us that the present subjection of the Mediator unto the Father *will continue* after the consummation of His glorious victory. It in nowise signifies that Christ's Divine Person shall withdraw from His humanity, or that as the God-man He *will* no longer be an Object of worship. On the other hand, the glorified humanity of Christ, notwithstanding all the honour and authority conferred upon it, is but *a creature*, and in the Eternal State this will be made evident. Let it be said emphatically that verse 28 must not be understood to mean that the Second Person in the Godhead, as such, will, throughout eternity, be under subjection to the First, for on the new earth there is “the throne of God *and* of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:1). Nevertheless, the man Christ Jesus will yet resign unto the Father His government of the wicked. Verse 28 refers to the re-assumption by God Himself of that power and authority delegated to the Mediator in connection with His rule over His enemies.

Before the ascension of Christ, God reigned as God; since that event, He reigns through the Mediator; when Christ has delivered up the usurped kingdom to the Father, then “God”—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—will be all in all. Yet even then Christ will still be the Head of His Church and reign upon His mediatorial throne. At the conclusion of his exposition of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28 the renowned Puritan, John Owen, said, “I declared that all the state of things which we have described shall then cease, and all things issue in the immediate enjoyment of God Himself. I would extend this no further than as unto that which concerneth the exercise of Christ's mediatory office with respect unto the Church *here below* and the *enemies* of it. But there are some things which belong to the essence of this state which shall continue unto all eternity, as, first, I do believe that the Person of Christ, in and by His human nature, shall be forever the immediate Head of the whole glorified creation. Second, that He shall be the means and way of communication between God and His glorified saints forever. Third, that the Person of Christ, and herein His human nature, shall be the eternal Object of Divine glory, praise and worship.”

As a concluding summary of what has been before us, we cannot do better than quote from John Brown's “The Resurrection of Life” (through which we have received much help in preparing these two articles) wherein he gives the following analysis of 1 Corinthians 15:24-28. “The passage, thus expounded, teaches

us the following principles: first, that the risen Saviour is invested with unlimited power and authority: He 'reigns'—'all things are subjected to Him.' Second, the design of His being thus invested with unlimited power and authority is, that He may 'restore the kingdom to the Father.' Third, in restoring the kingdom to the Father, He will 'put down all opposing rule, and authority, and power.' Fourth, in the accomplishment of this, the destruction of death as an opposing power is necessarily involved. Fifth, all this is to be accomplished by *Divine* power, administered by the Son, that the whole glory of the bringing back of the kingdom may be seen to belong, and be ascribed, to Him, 'of whom are all things, and through whom are all things' and to whom, therefore, it is most meet that all things should be—whose glory ought to be the end, as His will is the cause and the law, of the universe.”— A.W.P.

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### **GOD'S WORD IN OUR HEARTS.**

Use 1. To persuade you to study the Scripture, that you may get understanding and hide the Word in your hearts for gracious purposes. This is the Book of books: let it not lie idle. The world can as well be without the sun as the Bible—Psalm 19 speaks first of the sun, then of the Law of God, which is to the Christian as the sun is to the outward world. Consider the great use of the Word for informing the understanding and reforming the will. The Word of God is able “to make the man of God perfect, and thoroughly furnished” (2 Tim. 3:17). “Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to Thy Word” (Psa. 119:9). A young man that is so heedless and headstrong, and in the very heat of his lusts, yet there is enough in the Word to cleanse, tame, and subdue him to God. Therefore let us get it into our hearts. To this end:

*Meditate* often on it: “Mary kept all these sayings” (Luke 2:19). How did she keep them? She “pondered them in her heart.” Musing makes the fire to burn, and deep and constant thoughts are operative. The hen which straggles from her nest when she sits a-brooding produces nothing; it is a constant incubation which hatches the young. So when we have only a few straggling thoughts, and do not brood upon the Truth; when we have flashes only, like a little glance of a sunbeam upon a wall, it does nothing; but serious thoughts, through the Lord's blessing, will do the work. Urge the heart again and again. Ask, is this a Truth?—then what will become of me if I disregard it; is this the Word of God, and does it find no more entertainment in my heart?

*Receive it in the love of it.* The Apostle makes this to be the ground of apostasy: “because they received not the love of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:10). O let it soak into the affections. If it lie only in the tongue or in the mind, only to make it a matter of talk and speculation, it will be soon gone. The seed which lies upon the surface, the fowls of the air will pick it up. Therefore hide it deeply; let it soak further and further. First men have a naked apprehension of truth, then it gets into the conscience, then it lies in the heart, then it is laid up. When it is dearer than our dearest lust, then it will stick by us. When it breaks in upon the heart with evidence and power, you cannot keep both.

Use 2. To direct you what to do in *reading*. It is a notable preservative against sin, and an antidote against the infection of the world: “The Law of God is in his heart, none of his steps shall slide” (Psa. 37:31). As long as truth is kept lively and active, and in view of conscience, we shall not slide, or not so often. We have many temptations to divert us from obedience; but we are in safety when the Law of God is in our heart. See how it was in Joseph's heart: “How can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?”—against God, that is of such sovereign majesty; of such infinite goodness and mighty power, so able to save and to destroy! Every time you read the Scripture you should lay up something. The best way to destroy ill weeds is by planting the ground with right seed. Then for *promises*: what have you hidden in your heart for comfort against desertions and afflictions? In a time of trial you will find one promise gives more comfort and support than all the arguments that can be produced by reason. “This is my comfort in my affliction: Thy *Word* hath quickened me” (Psa. 119:50). He had a word to support him: therefore let us treasure up the promises. So for *threats*, especially against the sins we are most inclined to: “Who among you will give ear, and hear for the time to come?” (Isa. 42:23). It is well with you for the present, but matters to come are put off, little cared for: Amos 6:3. You should think of and provide against what will come afterward.

So in *hearing*. Do not hear lightly, but hide the Word in your heart, that it be not embezzled by your own negligence, forgetfulness, running into carnal distractions; that it be not purloined by Satan, that he may not snatch away the good Seed out of your soul. When the Word is preached, there is more company present than is visible; there are angels and demons in the assembly. Whenever the sons of God meet together, Satan is there too. The Devil is present to divert the mind by wandering thoughts, by raising prejudices that we may cast out the Word—or by excuses, delays, evasions, putting it off to others when we begin to have some sense of our sin and danger. The Devil is loath to let us go too far, lest Christ get a subject into His kingdom. Therefore let us labour to get something into the heart by every sermon: some fresh consideration is given out to set you a-work in the spiritual life. A conscientious waiting upon God will find something every time. It is sad to consider how many have heard much, and laid up little or nothing at all; it may be they have laid it up in their notebooks, but not laid up the Word in their hearts.

For *meditation*. Meditate upon the Word: do not study it in a cursory manner, or content yourselves with a slight taste, or a little volatile affection; but ponder it seriously, that it may enter into your very heart. Hasty and perfunctory thoughts work nothing. Meat must be well chewed and digested, if you would have it turn into good blood and energy. You must follow the Word closely till it settle into some affection. So much then for David's practice: “Thy Word have I hid in my heart.” The second thing is the aim and end of it: “that I might not sin against Thee.”

In hiding the Word in our hearts there must be *a right design*: our knowledge of it and delight in it are to be directed to *practice*. First, we must not study the Word merely out of *curiosity*, that we may know what is said there, as men will pry into civil art and secular subjects. So the Athenians flocked about Paul: Acts 17:18-21; so for novelty's sake men may have an affection in the Word—“ye were willing for a season to rejoice in his light” (John 5:35). There are certain adulterous affections we have to the Word when it is new and fresh, but when it grows familiar we loathe it. This affection to the Word is soon spent.

Second, we must not hide the Word in our heart that we may be able to *teach others*, that we may make a gainful trade of it. Alas! a man may teach others and be himself a castaway. Look, as in coining of money, an iron stamp may impress the character and print upon a piece of silver or of gold, so God may use the gifts of some men to beget faith in others, and perish themselves. “We have prophesied in Thy name,” yet “depart from Me; I know you not” (Matt. 7:22-23).

Third, this must not be our end either: not merely for *delight*. Largeness of knowledge brings a content with it, as it is an addition to our equipment. Truth is the object of our understanding, and may please an unsanctified mind. Not merely out of subserviency to some base and inferior ends, that we get esteem in the world or the reputation of knowing persons, but as it is an elevation of the understanding. Every delight in *Truth* is not a delight in *God*! There is a natural delight we have in the contemplation of any sublime truth: this is merely a delight in the work of our own faculties, when the affections are terminated in bare knowledge—as it is a high and mysterious truth, or as it is a delectation to the understanding.

Fourth, we are not merely to study the Word for the *comfort* of it, and the suitableness to the conscience. As man is a reasonable creature, he will delight in knowledge; and as he has a conscience which presages death and judgment to come, he may delight in the comfort of it. Many search out promises, but do not love precepts. The stony ground seem to have a joy; they may delight in the comfortable part of religion, but this joy comes to nothing—this gladsome forward spring is no sure prognostication of a plentiful harvest. Then only do we receive the Word aright when we look to the holy part, and *mortify* our natural desires and affections. Many deal with the Word as great men do with fleshly companions—willing to entertain them at their tables—to hear their discourse, because of the pleasantness of their mirth; but to enter into bonds for them, and discharge them from debt, or better their fortunes, that they will not do. So many will give Christ and the Word, especially the comfortable part of it, entertainment; but they are loath to take the duty of the Gospel unto themselves. Therefore it is not enough to study the Word merely that we may cherish our own persons with the comforting part of it, but we must also study the holy part and that which does require our duty. Then let us labour to hide the Word in our hearts as David did: that we may not sin against God. (A sermon by the Puritan Manton, slightly abbreviated).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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February, 1938

### **TRUST IN GOD.**

A right judgment of God will help us to employ our faith in any condition. *In wealth* men are apt to trust in their abundance, to stand upon their mountain, and to say, “I shall never be moved.” But now in this estate, if a man conceives aright of God—that it is He who gives strength to be rich, and who gives strength to do us good—that He can blast the greatest estate with an imperceptible consumption, and in the midst of a man's sufficiency make him to be in straits, that He can embitter all with His sore displeasure, and not suffer the flour nor the winepress to feed him. In great wisdom and deep counsels, if a man considers that “the counsel of the Lord shall stand,” and that He can turn the wisdom of the world into foolishness, and catch the wise in their own craftiness; in great provisions of worldly strength and human combinations, if he consider that God can take off the wheels, dissipate the affections, melt the spirits, and waylay the enterprises of the largest hosts of men; that He can arm flies, and lice, and dust, and winds, and stars, and every small unexpected contingency against the strongest opposition—it must needs make him set his rest and hang his confidence and assurance upon an higher principle.

Again—*in poverty* and the most extreme straits which a man can be in, if he considers that God is a God of the valleys as well as of the hills; that He will be seen in the mount when His people are under the sword; that the Lord knows the days of the upright, and will satisfy them in the time of famine: that when the young lions famish for hunger (they which live not by the fruits on the earth, but by their prey; they which can feed on the dead bodies of those other creatures which a famine has devoured), yet even *then* He can provide abundantly for His own; that when things are marvelous unto us, then they are easy unto

Him, that when they are impossible unto us, then they are possible with Him; that He can lead in a wilderness, and feed with all unknown and unsuspected bread; that when the light of the sun and moon shall fail, He can be an everlasting light and glory to His people; that as a Father so He pities, and as an heavenly Father so He knows, and can supply all our need; that when we are without any wisdom to disappoint, or strength to withstand the confederacies of men, when they come with chariots of iron and walls of brass, even then the eyes of the Lord run too and fro to show Himself strong in the behalf of those that walk uprightly; that He can then order some Providence, produce some engine, discover some way to extricate—then will a man learn to be anxious or distracted in nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, make his requests known unto Him who is at hand, and who cares for him.—E. Reynolds, 1648.

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March, 1938

### CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

“The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done: and there is *no* new thing under the sun. Is there *any* thing whereof it may be said, See, this is new? it hath been *already* of old time, which was before us” (Eccl. 1:9, 10). How little is the plain testimony of these verses really believed today by many professing Christians, yea, how often is it contradicted both in pulpit and in pew by those who are thoroughly infatuated by what they style “the signs of the times.” If they hear or read of some wide-spread crime wave sweeping over a portion of the world, or some recently sprung-up cults of error which are fatally deceiving tens of thousands, or of a terrible epidemic of disease that is slaying large numbers of their fellows, they at once jump to the conclusion that nothing like it has ever happened before, and draw prophetic deductions from what they imagine is without precedent.

When the air is filled with rumours of war, and more so still when hostilities actually break forth, lovers of the sensational promptly quote Matthew 24:6-8 to show that the end of the age is upon us. If war be followed by famine, pestilence, and earthquakes in divers places, then appeal is promptly made to Revelation 6, with loud assertions that that prediction is now in course of fulfillment. The sad state of Christendom—with its unfaithful pulpits, rapidly decreasing church attendance, waning Sunday Schools, the increase of sham conversions, the decay of vital godliness—is cited as clear proof that the coming of the Lord is certain to take place in our own lifetime. The fearful spread of lawlessness on every side, the blatant defiance of moral standards, the almost universal desecration of the Sabbath, are often said to be without parallel in human history. Nevertheless God's Word expressly declares “That which hath been is

now; and that which is to be *hath already been*" (Eccl. 3:15).

Human nature has been the same in every age. The history of the New Testament era has been, in all its essential features but a repetition of what occurred in Old Testament times. The prevalence of idolatry, the abounding of wickedness in every conceivable form, the frightfulness and frequency of wars, the failure of the masses to take to heart and profit from visitations of Divine judgment, the general refusal to heed the exhortations and expostulations of God's servants, and the low spirituality which obtained amongst the Lord's own people, are recorded in the Old Testament in letters of blood and tears. "The dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty" (Psa. 74:20)—to a much greater extent than now obtains. "Help, LORD, for the godly man *ceaseth*; for the faithful fail from among the children of men" (Psa. 12:1)—the godly have ever been an insignificant remnant. "Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law" (2 Chron. 15:3): this was in Old Testament times.

It is true there is an ebb and flow of the tide. The book of Judges supplies a striking illustration of this. Over and over again in that book the following order is seen: Israel sinning against the Lord, His selling them into the hands of their enemies, their crying to Him for relief, His delivering of them, and then their lapsing back into wickedness. Identically the same order is observable throughout the long history of Christendom. Frequently, Israel sank very low, and then God granted a gracious revival, which was followed by backsliding and spiritual deadness. In the time of Josiah, Hezekiah, and Ezra, there were radical reformatations, but the effects of these soon spent themselves. In the days of David conditions were much better than under the reign of Saul, while under Ahab things were much worse than in the days of Solomon. Sometimes the restraining hand of God was more evidently placed upon the lusts of man, while at others it was more manifestly removed. Sometimes His Word went forth in mighty power; at others His servants cried "who hath believed our report?"

It is striking to note that immediately following the Scripture with which we began this article we read, "There is no remembrance of former things" (Eccl. 1:11). That is the trouble with our present age. *Conditions in the past are largely unknown today.* A generation has arisen which does little or no serious reading, which are largely unacquainted with history, and unaware of the fact that present conditions are but a reduplication of those which have frequently obtained before. And "signs of the times" preachers trade upon their ignorance and credulity, making them suppose that much which is transpiring in the world is altogether extraordinary, that conditions now are such that they *cannot* go on much longer, that without any doubt the end of the age is upon us, and so on. But over against all such talk it stands written, "There is *no new thing* under the sun!"

It should prove an eye-opener to some of our readers to learn something of what has obtained in the past. Such an abundance of material is before us that we find it difficult to decide which portion of it to discard. It would cover far too much space were we to attempt a picture describing the outstanding features of each generation during the last eighteen centuries, so we will generalize the earlier ones, and enter into more detail upon those which followed the great Reformation of Luther. Here, too, we can only make a selection, dealing with the most prominent characteristics. As far as possible we shall avoid doing so in our own words, quoting from the writings of those who actually lived in those days, and giving book and page reference, so that any who wish to take the trouble of consulting a good public library, may verify for

themselves.

“The Church's story from the close of the New Testament Canon to the era of the Patristic theologians must be gleaned from the revelations their writings afford of its condition in their own time. Who can doubt that then, as in the days of Israel's apostasy, there were many who feared the Lord and thought upon His name? But here I am speaking of the Church as a whole. Protestantism delights in attributing to the Romish apostasy the vices which disgraced the Church of Christendom during the Middle Ages; but in this regard the Church of Rome was merely the product and development of the much-vaunted “primitive Church” of the Fathers. Abundant proof of this will be found in the acts and words of some of the great and holy men who sought in vain to stem the evil tide. The facts are disclosed in various standard works: here of course a few characteristic extracts must suffice.

“The birth of Cyprian occurred about a century after the death of the last of the Apostles. Born and bred in Paganism, he was converted in middle age, and three years afterwards he became Bishop of Carthage. Ten years later he suffered Martyrdom in the Valerian persecution. The following words may indicate the condition of the Church in his time: 'Serious scandals existed even among the clergy. Bishops were farmers, traders, and money-lenders, and by no means always honest. Some were too ignorant to teach the catechumens. Presbyters made money by helping in the manufacture of idols.'

“In Cyprian's day 'the virgins of the Church' ['nuns' we call them now] were held in special honour on account of their reputed sanctity. What, then, passed for superior sanctity may be gleaned from the following words of that eminent and holy man: 'What have the virgins of the Church to do at promiscuous baths, there to violate the commonest dictates of feminine modesty! The places you frequent are more filthy than the theatre itself; all modesty is there laid aside; and with your robes your personal honour and reserve are cast off.'

“Half a century before these words were written Clement of Alexandria had bewailed the low morality which prevailed among Christians, even at a time when, as he said, 'the wells of martyrdom were flowing daily.' Referring to then attendance at church he wrote: 'After having waited upon God and heard of Him, they leave Him there, and find their pleasure without in ungodly fiddling, and love-songs, and what-not—stage plays and gross revelries.'

“The 'conversion of Constantine' set free the Church to put her house in order, and pursue her mission to the world without hindrance from without. But her condition in those halcyon days may be judged by the fact that at a single visitation the great Chrysostom deposed no fewer than thirteen bishops for simony and licentiousness. Nor was this strange, having regard to the means by which men secured election to the Episcopal office. Here are Chrysostom's words: 'That some have filled the churches with murders, and made cities desolate when contending for *this position*, I now pass over, lest I should seem to say what is incredible to say.'

“He was equally unsparing in dealing with the vices of the lower orders of the clergy. The natural result followed. The 'historic Church' convened a packed council, which deprived him of his archbishopric, and he was banished to Nicea. Moved, however, by the indignant fury of the laity, the Emperor recalled him,

and his return to Constantinople was like a public triumph. But his fearless and scathing denunciations of the corruptions and immoralities of Church and Court led to the summoning of another council, more skillfully arranged; and his second banishment was intended to be, as in fact it proved, a death sentence. He practically died a martyr—one of the first of the great army whose blood cries to God for vengeance upon the 'historic Church.'

“Nor were licentiousness and simony evils of recent growth in the Church; nor were they peculiar to the see of Chrysostom. In A.D. 370 an imperial edict was read in the churches of Rome, prohibiting clerics and monks from resorting to the houses of widows or female wards, and making them 'incapable of receiving anything from the liberality or will of any woman to whom they may attach themselves under the plea of religion; and (the edict adds) any such donations or legacies as they shall have appropriated to themselves shall be confiscated.'

“This edict, sweeping though its terms were, had to be confirmed and strengthened by another twenty years later. And here is the comment of Jerome on the subject: 'I blush to say it, heathen priests, players of pantomimes, drivers of chariots in the circus, and harlots are allowed to receive legacies; clergy and monks are forbidden to do so by Christian princes. Nor do I complain of the law (he adds), but I am grieved that we *deserve* it.' According to Jerome, so great was the evil that men actually sought ordination in order to gain easier access to the society of women, and to trade upon their credulity. He, at least, maintains no reserve about the vices of the clergy of his day. And the picture he draws of the state of female society among the Christians is so repulsive that, as a recent writer remarks, we would gladly believe it to be exaggerated, but (he adds), if the priesthood, with its enormous influence, was so corrupt, it is only too probable that it debased the sex which is always most under clerical influence.

“Of 'Saint' Cyril of Alexandria, Dean Milman writes: 'while ambition, intrigue, arrogance, rapacity, and violence are proscribed as unchristian means; barbarity, persecution, bloodshed as unholy and unevangelical wickedness; posterity will condemn this orthodox Cyril as one of the worst of heretics against the spirit of the Gospel.'

“A kindly estimate this, of a man who was morally guilty of the murder of Hypatia, and who was a notorious mob leader, and the brutal persecutor of the Jews, whom he drove out of Alexandria by the thousands, giving up their houses to pillage. This turbulent pagan claims notice here only because he was the ruling spirit in the Council of Ephesus (A.D. 451), which dealt with the heresies of Nestorius. Cyril had hurled anathemas against him for refusing to acknowledge the Virgin Mary as the 'Mother of God,' and he procured his condemnation by means that would discredit the lowest political contest, including the free use of a hired mob. So disgraceful was the disorder which prevailed that the Emperor dissolved the Council with the rebuke: 'God is my witness that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discover and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.'

“No one need suppose that a wider outlook would lead us to reverse the judgment to which these facts and testimonies point. A portly volume would not contain the evidence available to prove the utter apostasy of 'the primitive Church of the Fathers.' One more testimony, however, is all I will here adduce. In his early

life Salvian of Marseilles was the contemporary of Jerome and Augustine, the greatest of all the Latin Fathers. A century had elapsed since 'the conversion of Constantine.' The 'persecution' which the Christians had most to fear from the State was due to their vices and crimes, and to the operation of penal laws of drastic severity, designed to prevent their lapsing back to paganism. Why was it, then, that God seemed to have forsaken the Church? Here is Salvian's answer: 'See what Christians actually are everywhere, and then ask whether, under the administration of a righteous and holy God, such men can expect any favour? What happens every day under our very eyes is rather an evidence of the doctrine of Providence, as it displays the Divine displeasure provoked by the debauchery of the Church itself.'

“The following are further extracts from the same treatise: 'How can we wonder that God does not hearken to our prayers? . . . Alas! how grievous and doleful is what I have to say! The very Church of God, which ought to be the appeaser of God, is but the provoked of God. And a very few excepted who flee from evil, what is almost every assembly of Christians but a sink of vices? For you will find in the Church scarcely one who is not either a drunkard or a glutton, or an adulterer, or a fornicator or frequenter of brothels, or a robber, or a murderer. I put it now to the consciences of all Christian people whether it be not so . . . The Churches are outraged by indecencies . . . You may well imagine what men have been thinking about at church when you see them hurry off, some to plunder, some to get drunk, some to practice lewdness, some to rob on the highway.'

“In accounting for the growth of Christianity in early days, Gibbon the Infidel gives prominence to the morality of the Christians. And Tertullian declared that no one who transgressed the rules of Christian discipline and propriety was recognized as a Christian at all. And yet two centuries later, almost every assembly of Christians had become a 'sink of vices.'

“There is no need in this connection to speak of the Church of the Middle Ages—the fiendish enemy and persecutor of all who feared the Lord and followed righteousness and truth. The estimates formed of the number of the martyrs are unreliable; for though not one of those many millions is forgotten in Heaven, the records on earth are altogether faulty. This at least is certain, that for long ages God was on the side of the martyrs, and that the Church of Christendom was the most awful impersonation of the powers of Hell that earth has ever known” (From “Forgotten Truths” by Sir Robert Anderson, pp. 88-96).

Much of the profligacy which obtained among professing Christians in the early centuries of this era is to be attributed unto the decay of sound doctrine in the Church and the rise and spread of fundamental error, We give one quotation thereon: “There was another sort of heresies, and so of real apostasy from the mystery of the Gospel, whose authors and followers yet pretended an adherence unto and profession thereof. These may be reduced to two heads: (1) Concerning the Person; and (2) concerning the grace of Christ. Of the first sort, the principal and most prevalent was that of the Arians, in denying His Deity; the latter, that of the Pelagians, in opposing His satisfaction, merit, and grace.

“The first of these (in the fourth century) was poured out as a flood from the mouth of the old Serpent, and bore all before it like a torrent; the latter insinuated itself as poison into the very vitals of the Church. The first, as a burning fever, carried present death with it and before it; the latter, as a gangrene or heretical distemper, insensibly consumed the vital spirits of religion. In the first, we have a most woeful evidence of

the instability of professors, and their readiness to forego the saving mysteries of the Gospel. For in little more than half an age after its first rise, the generality of Christians in the world, bishops, priests, and people, fell under the power of it, and in their public confessions renounced and denied the true eternal Deity of the Son of God. For having obtained the patronage of some emperors, as Constantius and Valens, and the suffrage of innumerable prelates, who jointly promoted this heresy by force and fraud—almost the whole world, as to outward profession, was for a season led into this apostasy, wherein some whole nations (as the Goths and Vandals) continued for sundry ages afterward. And for the latter, or Pelagianism, it secretly, subtly, and gradually so insinuated itself into the minds of men, that for the substance of it, it continues to be no small part of that religion which the generality of Christians do at this day profess” (John Owen, 1670, Vol. 17, p. 359). Arminianism is but a slightly refined Pelagianism.—A.W.P.

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March, 1938

### THE BLESSED MAN.

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful” (Psa. 1:1). We have been much impressed by the fact that the wondrous and precious Psalter opens with the word “Blessed,” and yet a little reflection shows it could scarcely begin with any other. As most of our readers are doubtless aware, “Psalms” means “Praises,” and the key note is here struck at the very outset, for it is only the “Blessed man” who can truly praise God, as it is *his* praises which are alone acceptable to Him. The word “Blessed” has here, as in so many places in Scripture (like Matt. 5:3-11), a double force. First and primarily, it signifies that the Divine benediction—in contrast from God's curse, rests upon this man. Second and consequently, it denotes that he is a *happy* man.

“Blessed is the man,” not “blessed are they”: the singular number emphasises the fact that piety is strictly a personal and individual matter. Now it is very striking to observe that God has opened this book of Psalms by describing to us the one whose “praises” are alone acceptable to Him. In all that follows to the end of verse 3, the Holy Spirit has given us a portrait (by which *we* may honestly compare ourselves) of the man on whom the Divine benediction rests, the only man who can worship the Father “in spirit and in truth.” The outstanding features in this portrait of the “blessed” man may be briefly expressed in three words: his separation (v. 1), his occupation (v. 2), his fertilization (v. 3).

“Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” As most readers are doubtless aware, the best of the commentators (as Spurgeon's “Treasury of David”) take as the leading thought of this verse,

*the downward course of the wicked*: walking, then standing (a more fixed state), and ending by sitting—thoroughly confirmed in evil; tracing a similar gradation of deterioration in their “counsel,” “way” and “seat,” as also in the terms by which they are designated: “ungodly—sinners—scornful.” But personally, we do not think this is the thought of the verse at all, for it is *irrelevant* to the passage as a whole, and would destroy its unity. No, the Spirit is here describing the character and conduct of the “blessed man.”

How very significant it is to note—how searching for our hearts—the first characteristic of the “blessed man” to which the Spirit here called attention is his walk, a walk in separation from the wicked! Ah, my reader, it is *there*, and nowhere else, that personal piety begins. There can be no walking with God, no following of Christ, no treading of the way of peace, till we separate from the world, forsake the paths of sin, turn our backs upon the “far country.” “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.” But notice exactly *how* it is expressed: it is not “who walketh not in the open wickedness” or even “the manifest folly,” but “walketh not in the *counsel* of the ungodly.” How searching that is! How it narrows things down!

The ungodly are ever ready to “counsel” the believer, seeming to be very solicitous of his welfare. They will warn him against being too strict and extreme, advising him to be broadminded and to “make the best of both worlds.” But the policy of the “ungodly”—i.e., of those who leave *God* out of their lives, who have not His “fear” before their eyes—is regulated by self-will and self-pleasing, and is dominated by what they call “common sense.” Alas, how many professing Christians regulate their lives by the advice and suggestions of ungodly friends and relatives: heeding such “counsel” in their business career, their social life, the furnishing and decorating of their homes, their dress and diet, the choice of school or avocation for their children.

But *not so* with the “blessed man.” He “walketh not in the counsel godly.” Rather is he afraid of it, no matter how plausible it sounds, apparently good the intention of those who proffer it. He shuns it, and says “Get thee behind me, Satan.” Why? Because Divine grace has taught him that he has something infinitely better to direct *his* steps. God has given him a Divine revelation, dictated by unerring wisdom, suited to his every need and circumstance, designed as a “lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path.” His desire and his determination is to walk by the wholesome counsel *of God*, and not by the corrupt counsel of the ungodly. Conversion is the soul's surrender to and acceptance of God as *Guide* through this world of sin.

The “blessed” man's separation from the world is given us in three details. First he “walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly,” that is, according to the maxims of the world. Eve is a solemn example of one who walked in the counsel of the ungodly, as is also the daughter of Herodius. On the other hand, Joseph declining the wicked suggestion of Potiphar's wife, David refusing to follow the counsel of Saul to meet Goliath in his armour, and Job's refusal to heed his wife's voice and “curse God,” are examples of those who did not do so. Second “nor standeth in the way of sinners.” Here we have the *associations* of the blessed man: he fellowships not with sinners. No, rather does he seek communion with the righteous. Precious examples of this are found in Abram's leaving Ur of the Chaldees, Moses turning his back on the honours and treasures of Egypt, Ruth's forsaking Moab to accompany Naomi. Third “nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.” The “scornful” may here be regarded as the ones who despise and reject the true Rest-

giver. “The seat” here speaks of relaxation and delectation: to sit not in the scorner's seat means that the blessed man takes not his ease nor seeks his joy in the *recreations* of the world. No; he has something far better than “the pleasures of sin”: “in *Thy* presence is fullness of joy”—as Mary found at the Lord's feet.

“But his delight is in the Law of the LORD” (Psa. 1:2). The opening “But” points a sharp contrast from the last clause of the previous verse, and serves to confirm our interpretation thereof. The worldling seeks *his* “delight” in the entertainment furnished by those who scorn spiritual and eternal things. Not so the “blessed” man: his “delight” is in something infinitely superior to what this perishing world can supply, namely, in the Divine Oracles. “The Law of the LORD” seems to have been one of David's favourite expressions for the Word: see Psalm 19 and 119. “The Law of the LORD” throws the emphasis upon its Divine authority, upon God's *will*. This is a sure mark of those who have been born again. The carnal mind is enmity against God, for it is not subject to the Law of God” (Rom. 8:7). To “delight in the law of the LORD” is a sure proof that we have received of the Spirit of Christ, for He declared “I *delight* to do Thy will, O My God” (Psa. 40:8). God's Word is the daily bread of the “blessed” man—is it so with you?

The unregenerate delight in pleasing *self*, but the joy of the Christian lies in pleasing *God*. It is not simply that he is *interested* in “the Law of the LORD,” but he *delights* therein. There are thousands of people, like Russellites, and Christadelphians, and, we may add, in the more orthodox sections of Christendom, who are keen students of Scripture, who delight in its prophecies, types, and mysteries, and who eagerly grasp at its promises; yet are they far from delighting in the *authority* of its Author and in being subject to His revealed will. The “blessed” man delights in its *precepts*. There is a “delight”—a peace, joy, and satisfaction of soul—pure and stable, to be found in subjection to God's will, which is obtainable nowhere else. As John tells us “His commandments are not grievous” (1 John 5:3), and as David declares “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa. 19:11).

“And in His Law doth he meditate day and night” (Psa. 1:2). Thereby does he *evidence* his “delight” therein: where his treasure is, there is his heart also! Here, then, is *the occupation* of the “blessed” man. The voluptuary thinks only of satisfying his senses; the giddy youth is concerned only with sport and pleasure; the man of the world directs all his energies to the securing of wealth and honours; but the “blessed” man's determination is to please God, and in order to obtain a better knowledge of His will, he meditates day and night in His holy Law. Thereby is light obtained, its sweetness extracted, and the soul nourished. His “meditation” herein is not occasional and spasmodic, but regular and persistent: not only in the “day” of prosperity, but also in the “night” of adversity; not only in the “day” of youth and strength, but in the “night” of old age and weakness.

“Thy Words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer. 15:16). What is meant by “did *eat* them”? Appropriation, mastication, assimilation. Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. It is as God's Word is pondered by the mind, turned over and over in the thoughts, and mixed with faith, that we assimilate it. That which most occupies the mind and most constantly engages our thoughts, is what we most “delight” in. Here is a grand cure for loneliness (as the writer has many times proved): to meditate on God's Law day and night. But real “meditation” in God's Law is an act of obedience: “Thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe *to do* according to all that is written therein” (Josh. 1:8). The Psalmist could thus appeal to

God—can you: “Give ear to my words, O LORD; consider my *meditation*” (Psa. 5:1).

“And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither, and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper” (Psa. 1:3). Here we have the “blessed” man's *fertilization*. But notice very carefully, dear reader, what *precedes* this. There must be a complete break from the world—separating from its counsel or policy, from fellowshiping its votaries, and from its pleasures; and there must be a genuine subjection to God's authority and a daily feeding upon His Word, before there can be any real fruitfulness unto Him. “He shall be like a tree.” This figure is found in numerous passages, for there are many resemblances between a tree and a saint. He is not a “reed” moved about by every wind that blows, nor a creeper, trailing along the ground. A tree is upright, and grows heavenward. This tree is “planted”: many are not, but grow wild. A “planted” tree is under the care and cultivation of its owner. Thus, this metaphor assures us that those who delight in God's Law are owned by God, cared for and pruned by Him.

“Planted by the rivers of water.” This is the place of refreshment—rivers of grace, or communion, of renewing. Probably the more specific allusion is unto “and a Man shall be as a hiding-place from the wind, and a covert from the tempest; as *rivers of water* in a dry place, as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land” (Isa. 32:2). That refers to Christ, and tells us that just as a tree derives life and fruitfulness from the adjacent river, so the believer, by communion, draws from the fullness there is for him in Christ. “That bringeth forth his fruit in his season.” This is an essential character of a gracious man, for there are no fruitless branches in the true Vine. “In his season,” for all fruits do not appear in the same month, neither are all the graces of the Spirit produced simultaneously. Trial calls for faith, suffering for the exercise of patience, disappointment for meekness, danger for courage, blessings for thanksgiving, prosperity for joy; and so on. This word “in season” is a timely one: we must not expect the fruits of maturity in those who are but babes.

“His leaf also shall not wither.” This means that his Christian profession is a bright and *living reality*. He is not one who has a name to live, yet is dead. No, his works evidence his faith. That is why “his fruit” is mentioned *before* “his leaf.” Where there is no fruit to God's glory our profession is a mockery. Note how it is said of Christ that He was “mighty in *deed* and word” (Luke 24:19): the same order is seen again in “that Jesus began both to *do* and teach” (Acts 1:1). “And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.” This necessarily follows, though it is not always apparent to the eye of sense. Not even a cup of water given in the name of Christ shall fail to receive its reward—if not here, certainly in the Hereafter. How far, dear reader, do you and I resemble this “blessed” man? Let us again press the *order* of these three verses. Just so far as we fall into the sins of verse 1 will our delight in God's Law be dulled, and just so far as we are not in subjection to His will shall we be fruitless. But a complete separation from the world, and wholehearted occupation with the Lord will issue in fruit to His praise.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

When the superiority and supremacy of the bishop of Rome was acknowledged by the other bishops (at the beginning of the 7th century), the papacy rapidly developed and dominated the whole of Christendom. Romanism was a strange combination of Judaism and Paganism, thinly veiled by a Christian nomenclature. Idolatrous in doctrine, corrupt in practice, withholding from the people the pure Word of God, and making its appeal to the lusts of the flesh, millions of adherents were secured, but at the cost of quenching the Spirit. Most significant is it that men from within her own pale testified to Rome's duplicity and wickedness. We quote from one such witness in the 11th century.

“Woe to this generation which hath the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy. If indeed that should be called hypocrisy, which now through its prevalence cannot be hid, and through its impudence seeks not to be hid. At present, rottenness and corruption affects the whole body of the Church, and the wider it spreads, the more desperate; and the more inwardly it spreads the more dangerous; for if an *heretic*, an open enemy, should rise up, he would be cast out; if a violent enemy, she (i.e., the Church), would perhaps conceal herself from him. But now, whom shall the Church cast out? or whom shall she hide herself from? All are friends, and all are enemies; all are in mutual connection as relations, yet in mutual contests as adversaries; all are fellow-members of one family, yet none are promoters of peace; all are neighbours, yet all are seekers of their own things; by profession servants of Christ, in reality they serve Antichrist; they make an honourable figure by the good things they have received from the Lord, while, at the same time, they give no honour to the Lord” (Bernard, sermon 33 on Canticles).

After the rise and domination of Romanism there followed what has been aptly termed “the Dark Ages,” for that Word of God which is to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path, was publicly put out. Nevertheless, from the 7th to the 14th centuries God by no means left Himself without witnesses on earth. Claude in Italy and Gootschalk (old German for “the servant of God”) in Saxony preached the doctrine of grace in the 9th century. In the 11th century the Waldenses were active in evangelism all through the Alps. In England such men as Bede, King Alfred the Good, Anselm and Bradwardine (archbishops of Canterbury) in the 11th and 14th centuries and Wycliffe are well-known names. Peter Lombard and John Husse in Bohemia were mighty instruments in the hands of God long before the days of Luther and Calvin.

It is unnecessary for us to write about the grand Reformation of the 16th century, but it will be pertinent to give one brief quotation to show the almost incredible vileness of human nature as evidenced in the awful persecution to which the people of God were then subjected. Foxe's book of Martyrs chronicles the murderous deeds of Rome in this country, but it is not so well-known what wholesale butchery took place in France. In his “History of Redemption,” Jonathan Edwards (a most cautious writer) says, “It is reckoned that about this time (1572) within thirty years there were martyred in France for the Protestant religion, 39 Princes, 148 Counts, 2,346 Barons, 147,518 Gentlemen, and 760,000 of the common people.” Were such a colossal tragedy to occur today how “students of prophecy” would make capital out of it! We spare our readers' feelings by refraining from a detailed account of the barbarous methods employed in torture—far worse than any we have read that the Bolsheviks use.

What we are now more concerned with is to observe *the ebb* of the Reformation tide and the rapid decay of piety which soon followed. “Go through all places, it shall be found that scarce one of a thousand in his dealings makes conscience of a lie: a great part of men get their wealth by fraud and oppression, and all kinds of unjust and unmerciful dealings . . . This doth appear to be true, by the practice and behaviour of men on the Lord's day: if the number of those which come to hear God's Word were compared with those which run about their worldly wealth and pleasure, I fear me the better sort would be found to be a little handful to a large heap, or as a drop to the ocean in respect of the other . . . Like to him (Herod) are many in these days, which gladly desire to hear the Gospel of Christ preached, only because they would hear speech of some strange things, laying aside all care and conscience to obey that which they hear. Yea, many in England delight to read the strange histories of the Bible, and therefore can rehearse the most part of it, yet come to the *practice* of it, the same persons are commonly found as bad in life and conversation, or rather *worse* than others . . . A rare thing it is to find the virtue of fidelity in the world now a-days: who is he that makes conscience of a lie? and is not truth banished out of our coasts?” (W. Perkins, 1595, Vol. 1, pp. 129, 154, 201, 275).

“Our lives shame us: open and manifest iniquities proclaim us unthankful. Fraud in our homes, drunkenness in our streets, oppression in our fields, adulteries in corners, corruption on benches . . . Irreligious and profane: other times have been notable for this, *ours* is notorious; the lusts of the flesh, if ever, are now manifest. Drunkenness reels in the streets, gluttony desires not to be housed. Bribery opens his hand to receive in the very courts. Robbery and murder swagger in the highways. Whoredom begins to neglect curtains, and grows proud of its impudence” (Thomas Adams, 1605, Vol. 1, pp. 131, 145).

“In 1623 Charles the First revived his father's edict for allowing sports and recreations on Sunday to such as attended public worship, and he ordered his proclamation for that purpose to be read by the clergy after Divine service. Those who were puritanically affected refused obedience, and were suspended or deprived. Such encouragement and protection which the king and the bishops gave to wakes, church-ales, bride-ales, and other church festivals of the common people, were objects of scorn to the Puritan” (Hume the historian). There are few indeed today who have any conception of the fearful profligacy of that monarch's court, the open immoralities which obtained in high places, the corruption of the law-courts, and the wickedness which abounded among the common people.

The servants of God who faithfully reprov'd and rebuked were no more popular then than they are now. Those who have uncompromisingly denounced wickedness, bade their hearers or readers repent of it, and threatened the everlasting wrath of God if they did not, have ever been unwelcome—thorns in the side of all who hate to have their consciences searched. “If a preacher reprov's sin, he is thought to do it out of harshness or to be too bitter and uncharitable, and they say he should preach God's love and mercy. Reprehension of sin is most condemned and least esteemed. But let a preacher preach dark mysteries and curious inventions, or odd conceits, and he will be widely welcomed” (Henry Smith, 1590, Vol. 2, p. 213).

In his comments upon “Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness” (James 4:9), Thomas Manton (1660) said, “Frothy spirits love their pleasure and ease: 'The fool's heart is in the House of mirth' (Eccl. 7:4). A loose, garish spirit doth not love to converse with mournful objects, or to be pressed to mourning duties. It showeth how instant and earnest we should be in pressing such duties as these: 'weep,' 'mourn,' 'be afflicted.' It is one of the fancies now in fashion that men would be altogether honeyed and oiled with grace; the wholesome severities of religion are distasteful. Some that would be taken for Christians of the highest form, are altogether prejudiced against such a doctrine as this is, and think we are *legal* when we press humiliation. How may the poor ministers of the Gospel go to God, and say as Moses did, 'The children of Israel have not hearkened unto me, how then shall Pharaoh hear me?' Lord, the professors will not brook such doctrine as this is, how shall we hope to prevail with the poor, blind, carnal world? Certainly it is very sad that that which was wont to be a badge of profaneness, men should now adopt it into their religion. I mean, *scoffing* at doctrines of *repentance* and humiliation” (Vol. 14, p. 374).

How shocked and saddened we are by what we now behold in the rising generation: their dislike of work, their mad craze for pleasure, their chaffing at all restraint. Yet the profligacy of youth and the present-day immodesty of the female sex, is *no new thing*. No, not even the modern craze of women bobbing their hair. Writing in 1620, Thomas Fuller, the Church Historian, said, “We see so many women so strangely disguised with fantastic fashions, yea, so many of them affecting man-like clothes and *shorn hair*, it is hard to discern the sex of a woman through the attire of a man.”

“I have often marveled at your youth, and said in my heart, What should be the reason that they should be so generally at this day debauched as they are? For they are now *profane to amazement*; and sometimes I have thought one thing, and sometimes another. At last I have thought of this: How if God, whose ways are past finding out, should suffer it to be so now, that He might make of some of them the more glorious saints hereafter? I know sin is of the Devil, but it cannot work in the world without permission; and if it

happens to be as I have thought, it will not be the first time that the Lord hath caught Satan in his own design. For my part, I believe the time is at hand that we shall see better saints in the world than have been seen for many a day. And this *vileness*, that at present does so much *swallow up our youth*, is one cause of my thinking so” (John Bunyan, about 1655, out of “The Jerusalem Sinner Saved”).

In the account of her experiences, Mrs. Brine, wife of John Brine, minister at Cripplegate, wrote, “Thus I went on near fifteen years of age, about which time (A.D. 1700) it pleased God to awaken me, and bring me to consider what state I was in. One night, being in my usual manner at play with my companions, and hearing them sware at a sad rate, taking the Lord's name in vain in *almost every sentence* they spoke; this I thought was not right in them, though I myself had much ado to keep from bad expressions” (from the collected writings of J. Brine, Vol. 1, p. 544). “Were children and youth ever more disposed to despise and abuse pious parental instruction, than at this day?” (about 1760). “Where is pious, parental instruction and faithfulness more despised and abused than in this place? Is there scarcely a pious child or youth to be found, even in religious families?” (Sermons of Nathaniel Emmons, Vol. 2, p. 122, Franklin, Mass., U.S.A.).

“Some of old thought that because they could cry, 'The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord,' that therefore they were delivered, or had dispensation to do the abominations which they committed. For who (say they) have a right to the creatures, if not Christians, if not church members? and from this conclusion, let go the reins of their inordinate affections after pride, gluttony, pampering themselves without fear, daubing themselves with the lust-provoking fashions of the times; to walk with stretched out necks, naked breasts, frizzled foretops, wanton gestures, in gorgeous apparel” (John Bunyan from the “Barren Fig Tree”). “The Apostle biddeth the women to cover their heads because of the angels” (1 Cor. 11:10), their fashion being to come into the congregation with loose disheveled locks; he mindeth them of the presence of the angels. We may use a like argument to women to cover their naked breasts, now their immodesty is grown so impudent as to out-face the ordinances of God” (Manton, Vol. 5, p. 250).

Today the godly are grieved by the lack of reality and genuineness in so many bearing the name of Christ—bemoaning the fact that so very few who claim to believe His Gospel give evidence in their daily lives that they have taken His yoke upon them. But *the abounding of empty professors is no new thing*, as the following quotations will show. “In this respect may these also be called 'the outward court,' who with impudence do arrogate to themselves the name of the Church, and under that name do in some places cast out the true worshippers; and who, by reason of their number—the *best* congregations of the first Reformation consisting of many more apparently bad than good—and many of those churches having none but men *unregenerate*” (Thomas Goodwin, about 1680, Vol. 3, p. 126).

“This is that apostasy which the Christian world groans under at this day (about 1660), and which, as is it is to be feared, will bring the judgments of God upon it. The very profession of piety is much lost, yea, much derided amongst many. . . Duties of holiness, strictness of conversation, communication unto edification are not only neglected, but *scorned*. It is in many places a lost labour to seek for Christianity among Christians; and the degeneracy seems to be *increasing every day*” (John Owen, Vol. 17, p. 475). “How few among the many, yea, among the swarms of professors, have heart to make conscience of walking before God in this world, and to study His glory among the children of men! How few, I say, have

His name lying nearer their hearts than their own carnal concerns! Nay, do not many make His Word, His name, and His ways, a stalking-horse to their own worldly advantages? God calls for faith, good conscience, moderation, self-denial, humility, heavenly-mindedness, love to saints, and to enemies, and for conformity in heart and life to His will: but *where is it?*” (John Bunyan from “The Strait Gate”).

“In those who enjoy the Gospel, profess the embracement of it, and yet continue *unfruitful*, none of all this appears. The world may make use of such barren souls as arguments that the Gospel is no such excellent doctrine, has no such Divine power or efficacy, produces no such desirable effects. For why? No such thing is visible in the temper of *multitudes who profess* that they believe it. They are but like other men, and exceed not many who were *never* acquainted with the Gospel: no more humble, no more holy, no more self-denying, no more public-spirited, no more heavenly-minded, no more mortified as to many lusts and passions, no more crucified to the world as to the riches, delights, and splendour of it, no more candid and sincere in dealings, no more merciful, no more active to do good in the world, no more fruitful in good works; and where is then the singular excellency and power of the Gospel? The light of nature has been effectual in some to restrain them from those enormities, from which many that enjoy the Gospel abstain not. O what dishonourable reflections doth this cast upon the glorious Gospel of Christ” (David Clarkson, 1680, Vol. 2, p. 397).

“We seem to grow weary of the name of Christ; and in the end of time mockers and atheistical spirits swarm everywhere; and the holy, meek, sober, humble, heavenly spirit seemeth to be *banished* out of the Christian world, but that a few broken-hearted souls keep it up. Partialities and sects are countenanced, while unquestionable duties are little regarded, except by those few who have the courage to live in a counter-motion to the practices of *a loose age*, by their holiness and serious regard to the hopes of another world” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 15, p. 309). “Our times may very justly be esteemed 'perilous'—difficult, troublesome, and dangerous; for many, who are of the religious profession, are manifestly under the influence of such vices as the Apostle in that place (2 Tim. 3) enumerates. Some are captivated by one, and others by other vices . . . In my opinion, they who make pretences to religion in words but in their behaviour are any way irregular, are the most dangerous companions a good man can intimately converse with—because he may be tempted to think that there is not much evil in this or that irregular practice through a charitable judgment he forms of the persons addicted to those practices . . .

“We have *lost* the chief glory of the Reformation, and the very life and soul of popery greatly flourishes amongst us, to our great scandal and the satisfaction of the Romanists. This is the dreadful condition of a multitude of those who pass under the denomination of Protestant Dissenters; and what will be the issue of these things, the Lord only knows . . . But *few* are careful to keep up *family worship*. There is reason to fear that it is very rarely practiced by many who would be thought to be Christians. The late hours of our clubs, which call for our attendance almost every evening, will not allow us time to give God thanks for the mercies of the day, to confess our sins to Him, and entreat His protection in the night in the presence of our children and servants. If worship is performed in the family at all, it is on the evening of the Lord's Day, when alehouses cannot enjoy our company with any decency. This was not always the case; Professors formerly did not behave themselves in this manner; we are *much degenerated* in our conduct” (John Brine, about 1740, Vol. 1, pp. 306, 7, 14, 27).

“The Apostle Paul complained of professors who walked not according to the Gospel. There has been occasion for the same complaint ever since; *but never more than the present*. Many walk at this day who make some profession of Christ and yet never attain to any steadfastness, but are tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine; and at last come to nothing. Others, pretending to be better settled, attain to some form of godliness, but are without the life and power of it; they appear to have some notions about the way of righteousness, but not being taught them of God, nor ever brought under the mighty influence of them their walk is very uneven, and generally in the end brings great scandal upon the name and cause of Christ. We have also many at this day who set out in the ways of religion who never felt the plague of their own hearts; these are commonly very confident and presumptuous; they make a shining profession and go on with great parade until they be tried, and then, in the time of temptation, they fall away” (William Romaine, about 1770, “The Walk of Faith,” p. 4).

“With all the preaching and printing 'tis but few indeed who know Christ and the power of His resurrection. I have been, you are, tried to the heart, to see how few know Him and have their minds enlightened by the glorious Gospel of the blessed God. Yet so it is, but here and there a person is really taken with the Lord” (S.E. Pierce's Letters, 1796). “There are but few who have their minds enlightened so as to see the worth and beauty of the Lord Jesus. You may very easily discern it in conversation with the generality of professors: to get money is more with very many than to converse with Christ” (Ibid. 1808). “In some places I have found those who are alive to these great things, but the state of the Church of Christ is very low: truth very little known, less beloved and received than is commonly apprehended; anything and everything seems to go down except the truth as it is in Jesus. It is a great honour to live in *such* times as the present, *when sin is rampant*, and errors and heresies of all sorts abound—because the grace of God in preserving the feet of His saints, in keeping them alive in Christ, and delivering them from making shipwreck of faith and a good conscience, is the more clearly evidenced” (Ibid. 1820).—A.W.P.

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### SATAN'S ACCUSATIONS.

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died” etc. (Rom. 8:33-34). Satan is the blackest enemy, and sin is the worst thing he can allege against me, or my soul is or can be subject unto; for Hell is not so evil as sin. Inasmuch as Hell is of God's making, but sin only of mine. Hell is made against me, but sin is committed against God. Now I know Christ came to destroy the works, and to answer the arguments and reasonings of the Devil. Thou canst not stand before God, saith Satan, for thou art a grievous sinner, and He is a devouring fire. But faith can answer—Christ is able both to cover and to cure my sin, to make it vanish as a mist, and to put it as far out of sight as the east is from the west—but thou hast nothing to do with Christ: thy sins are so many and so foul—but surely the blood of Christ is more acceptable to my soul, and much more honourable and precious in itself when it covereth a multitude of sins.

Paul was a persecutor, a blasphemer, and injurious, the greatest of all sinners, and yet he obtained mercy, that he might be for a pattern of all longsuffering to those that should after believe in Christ. If I had as much sin upon my soul as thou hast, yet faith could unload them all upon Christ, and Christ could swallow them all up in His mercy. *But thou hast still nothing to do with Him, because thou continuest in thy sin.* But doth He not call me, beseech me, command me to come unto Him? If then I have a heart to answer His calls, He hath a hand to draw me to Himself, though all the powers of darkness or sins of the world stood between. *But thou obeyest not His call.* True indeed and pitiful it is, that I am so dull of hearing, and slow of following the voice of Christ. I lack much faith, but yet Lord, Thou dost not use to quench the

smoking flax or to break the bruised reed. I believe, and Thou art able to help mine unbelief. I am resolved to venture my soul upon Thy mercy, to throw away all my own loading, and to cleave only to this plank of salvation.

*But faith purifieth the heart, whereas thou art unclean still.* True indeed, and miserable man I am therefore, that the motions of sin do work in my members. But yet Lord, I hate every false way; I delight in Thy Law with my inner man; I do that which I would not; but I consent to Thy Law that it is good; I desire to know Thy will, to fear Thy name, and to follow Thee whithersoever Thou leadest me. *But these are but the empty wishings and wouldings of an evil heart.* Lord, to me belongeth the shame of my failings, but to Thee belongeth the glory of Thy mercy and forgiveness. Too true it is that I do not all I should: but do I *allow* myself in anything that I should not? do I make use of mine infirmities to justify myself by them, shelter myself under them? Though I do not the things I should, yet I love them and delight in them; my heart and all the desires of my soul are towards them. I hate, abhor, and fight with myself for not doing them; I am ashamed of mine infirmities, as the blemishes of my profession; I am weary of them, and groan under them as the burden of my soul.

I have no lust, but I am willing to know it; and when I know it, crucify it. I hear of no further measure of grace, but I admire and hunger after it, and press on to it. I can take Christ and affliction, Christ and persecution together. I can take Christ without the world, I can take Christ without myself. I have no unjust gain, but I am ready to restore it. I have followed no sinful pleasure, but I am ready to abandon it; no evil company, but I mightily abhor it. I never swore an oath but I remember it with a bleeding conscience. I do not in any man see the image of Christ, but I love Him the more dearly for it and loathe myself for being so much unlike Him. I know Satan—I shall speed never the worse with God, because I have him for mine enemy. I know I shall speed much the better, because I have myself for mine enemy. Certainly, he that can take Christ offered, that can in all points admit Him—as well to purify as to justify, as well to rule, as save—need not fear all the powers of darkness, nor all the armies of the foulest sins which Satan can charge his conscience with.—E. Reynolds, 1648.

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### THE LOVE OF GOD.

“I will love them freely” (Hosea 14:4). God's love is a most free and bountiful love, having no motive or foundation but *within itself*, and His free love and grace is the ground of all His other mercies to His people. He showeth mercy on whom, and because He will show mercy (Rom. 9). From the beginning to the end of our salvation, nothing is primarily alive but free grace: freely loved (Deut. 7:7, 8), freely chosen (Eph. 1:5, 6), Christ the gift of free love (John 3:16), His obedience freely accepted for us and bestowed upon us (Rom. 5:15, 18). Justification free (Rom. 3:24), adoption free (Eph. 1:3), faith and repentance free (Phil. 1:29; 2 Tim. 2:25), good works free (Eph. 2:10), salvation free (Titus 3:5). Thus the foundation of all mercies is free love.

We do not first give to God, that He may render to us again. We turn, we pray, we covenant, we repent, we are holy, we are healed, only because He loves us; and He loves us not because He sees anything lovely or amiable in us, but because He will show the absoluteness of His own will, and the unsearchableness of His own counsel towards us. We are not originally denominated good by anything which flows from us, or is done by us, but by that which is bestowed upon us. Our goodness is not the motive of God's love, but His love the fountain of our goodness. None indeed are healed and saved, but those that repent and return; but *repentance* is only a condition, and that freely *given* by God, disposing the subject for salvation; not a cause or procuring God to save us. It is necessary as the means to the end, not as the cause to the effect. That which looks least free of any other gift of God is His *rewarding* of obedience, but that is all and only of *mercy*. When we sow in righteousness, we must reap in mercy (Hosea 10:12), but when He renders

according to our works, it is because of His mercy (Psa. 62:12).

This is the solid bottom and foundation of all Christian comforts, that God loves freely. Were His love to us to be measured by *our* fruitfulness or carriages towards Him, each hour and moment might stagger our hope; but He is therefore pleased to have it all of grace, “that the promise might be sure to all the seed” (Rom. 4:16). This comforts us against the guilt of the greatest sin, for love and free grace can pardon what it will. This comforts us against the accusations of Satan drawn from our own unworthiness. 'Tis true, I am unworthy, and Satan cannot show me unto myself more vile, than without his accusations I will acknowledge myself to be; but that love that gave Christ freely, doth give in Him more worthiness than there is or can be unworthiness in me. This comforts us in the assured hope of glory, because when He loves He loves to the end (John 13), and nothing can separate from His love (Rom. 8:35-39). This comforts us in all afflictions, that the free love of God, who has predestinated us thereunto, will wisely order it unto the good of His servants (Rom. 8:28).

And what is our *duty* in response thereto? First, to labour for assurance of this free love. It will assist us in all duties; it will arm us against all temptations; it will answer all objections that can be made against the soul's peace; it will sustain us in all conditions which the saddest of times can bring us into—“If God be for us, who can be against us”! Though thousands should be against us to *hate* us, yet none shall be against us to *hurt* us. Second, if God loves us freely we should love Him thankfully (1 John 4:19), and let love be the salt to season all our sacrifices. For as no benefit is saving unto us which does not proceed from love in Him, so no duty is pleasing unto Him which does not proceed from love in us (1 John 5:3). Third, *plead* this free love and grace in prayer. When we beg pardon, nothing is too great for love to forgive; when we beg grace and holiness, nothing is too good for love to grant. There is not anyone thing which faith can manage unto more spiritual advantages, than the free grace and love of God in Christ.

Fourth, yet we must so magnify the love of God as that we turn not free grace into wantonness. There is a corrupt generation of men, who under pretence of exalting grace, do put disgrace upon the Law of God, by taking away the mandatory power thereof from those that are under grace—a doctrine most extremely contrary to the nature of this love. For God's love to us works love in us to *Him*—and our love to Him is this, that we *keep His commandments*. And to keep a commandment is to confirm and to subject my conscience with willingness and delight unto the rule and preceptive power of that commandment. Take away the obligation of the Law upon conscience as a rule of life, and you take away from our love to God the very matter about which the obedience thereof should be conversant. It is no diminution to love that a man is bound to obedience (nay it cannot be called “obedience” if I be not *bound* unto it) but herein the excellency of our love to God is commended, that whereas other men are so bound by the Law that they fret at it, swell against it, and would be glad to be exempted from it, they who love God and know His love to them delight to be thus bound, and find infinitely more sweetness in the strict rule of God's Holy Law than any that man can do in that presumptuous liberty, wherein he allows himself to shake off and break the cords of it.—Edward Reynolds (1648).

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1938

### CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

There is nothing more outstanding today in the sad state of Christendom than *the abounding of empty professors* (those with a non-saving or dead faith), and as so many suppose that this is a certain precursor of the Great Apostacy which will mark the terminal of this age, we give further quotations to show that identically the same feature has prominently marked other generations in the past. “Christ is a Lord to command us to walk in the way of life. The fault of our times is that multitudes profess Christ, yet many allow of no Christ but of their own devising, namely, a Christ that must be a Saviour to deliver from Hell, but not a Lord to command them; *that* they cannot brook . . . Faith was never more professed, yet there was never less true faith” (Perkins, Vol. 2, pp. 163, 230). And this, be it noted, was in the palmy days of the Reformation!

“These are days wherein we have as sad and tremendous examples of apostasy, backsliding, and falling from high and glorious pitches in profession, as any age can parallel. As many washed swine returning to their mire, and as many Demases going after the present evil world, and men going out from the church which were never truly and properly of it, as many sons of the morning and children of high illumination and gifts sitting in darkness, and that of all sorts; as ever in so short a space of time since the name of Christ was known upon the earth. What through the deviating of some to the ways of the world, and the lusts of the flesh; what of others, to spiritual wickedness and abominations; it is seldom that we see a professor to hold out in the glory of his profession to the end” (John Owen, Vo1. 6, p. 123).

“It were enough to excite a smile if the subject was not too serious for laughter, to behold the seeming zeal with which numbers in the present day (A.D. 1800) are hastening to convert *others*, many of whom, it is to be feared, were never converted *themselves*; and to hear the indignation expressed by many against infidels, who, as far as relates to any saving work of grace wrought upon their own souls, are no less infidels under a different bearing. All such Christians are Christians only by system. Their creed is derived from their fathers, and is either the effect of habit or education” (Robert Hawker, Vol. 7, p. 500). As it is now, so it was then; as it was then, so it is now—thousands of nominal Christians engaged in “personal” and “missionary” work, who are ignorant of some of the most rudimentary principles of the Faith, working merely in the energy of the flesh.

How the true servant of God bemoans the *lack of response* today unto faithful preaching, the stolid indifference of his hearers: neither the terrors of the Law nor the attractions of the Gospel making any impression. Elderly evangelists are complaining how much rarer genuine conversions are now than they were thirty years ago. But this is no new thing. “This age is miserable if we regard the practice of faith and repentance which God requireth: for men live in ignorance, without knowledge, they go on in looseness of life without reformation, which is both odious to God and scandalous to men; not one in an hundred turn to God at the preaching of His Word, renewing his ways by daily repentance” (Perkins, Vol. 3, p. 249). “How many have melting hearts when they hear God blasphemed and the religion of Christ wronged? How few are there that yield to the motions of the Spirit! We may take up a wonderful complaint of the hardness of men's hearts in these days, who never tremble at the Word of God. Neither His promises, nor threatenings, nor commands, will melt their hearts” (R. Sibbes, about 1630, Vol. 6, p. 40).

“We are fallen into times in which the thing and doctrine of it is forgotten and laid aside, in which there are multitudes of professors but few converts, many that seem to walk in the way of life, but never came in at the strait gate. There is a zeal amongst us to advance this or that reformation in religion, and it hath been all the cry. But, my brethren, where is *regeneration* called for or regarded? We have seen the greatest outward alterations that ever were in any age; kingdoms turned and converted into commonwealths, the powers of Heaven and earth shaken; but men, although they turn this way and that, from this or that way, from this opinion to that, yet their hearts generally turn upon the same hinges they were hung upon when they came into this world. In this University of Oxford we have had puttings out and puttings in, but where is putting off the old man and putting on the new? Where do we hear (as we did formerly) of souls carrying home the Holy Spirit from sermons, of their being changed and made new, and of students running weeping to their studies crying out 'What shall I do to be saved?' This was heretofore a common cry. Conversion is the only standing miracle in the Church, but I may truly say this miracle is *well-nigh ceased*; we hear of few of them” (Thomas Goodwin, 1670, Vol. 6, p. 157).

Nor is the low state of spirituality which now obtains so generally amongst those we have reason to believe *are* the Lord's people, any new thing. “O that this union among saints was more conspicuous and evident. But with grief of heart be it spoken, little is to be seen of that, whilst much of that which is the opposite to it is everywhere too apparent. What schisms, rents, divisions are to be found even amongst the Lord's people” (J. Jacombe, 1647, p. 55). “The English Christians heretofore were famous for their strict walking, constant communion with God, undaunted zeal, sweet experiences, holy conferences and communications, whereas now we meet with but such as are, like the vain men of Israel, of a light spirit,

loose conversation; given to vain wranglings and disputes, more than to practicing a holy life, and measuring religion not so much by the power of godliness as by form and faction, and siding with parties” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 5, p. 424).

“We are departed from the Lord, and the Lord is in great measure departed from us. What a woeful withering wind has blown upon God's vineyard in the land! We are fallen from our first love, our former zeal for God and His precious truths, and the royalties of our Redeemer's crown. And is there not a lamentable decay as to the power and life of godliness, which has dwindled away into an empty form with the most? To conclude, it is not with the nobles, gentry, ministers, or people in Scotland, as once in a day it has been; and the worst of it is, that though it be so, though gray hairs are here and there upon us, yet we do not perceive it: we make our faces harder than a rock, and refuse to return to the Lord” (Eb. Erskine, about 1760, Vol. 1, p. 112).

“We live in a day when the love of many (of whom we would hope the best), is, at least, grown very cold. The effects of a narrow, suspicious, censorious and selfish spirit are but too evident amongst professors of the Gospel. If I were to insist at large upon the offenses of this kind which abound amongst us, I should seem almost reduced to the necessity either of retracting what I have advanced, or of maintaining that a great part (if not the greatest part) of those who profess to know the Lord, are deceiving themselves with a form of godliness, being destitute of its power: for though they may abound in knowledge and gifts, and have much to say upon the subject of Christian experience, they appear *to lack* the great, the inimitable, the indispensable criterion of true Christianity, *a love to the brethren*; without which all other seeming advantages and attainments are of no good” (John Newton, 1770, Vol. 1, p. 180). “Whether the present age be worse than others which have preceded it, I shall not determine [wise man!], but this is manifest, that it abounds not only in infidelity and profligacy, but with great numbers of loose characters among professing Christians. Even of those who retain a decency of character, many are sunk into a *Laodicean lukewarmness*” (Andrew Fuller, 1810, Vol. 4, p. 355).

Reference has previously been made to the fearful profligacy of the court of Charles the First, and the open wickedness which prevailed generally in this land throughout his reign. Under the Protectorate of Oliver Cromwell conditions greatly improved, but after his demise (in 1658) and upon the enthronement of Charles the Second, the rivers of evil soon broke their banks, spreading moral desolation far and wide. “Few have any idea of the flood of ungodliness and profanity which characterized the reign of Charles II. It was not merely libertinism and the most unblushing profligacy which stalked abroad in open day, but the most avowed infidelity and coarsest profaneness. It was as if all Hell had broken loose; and as if ungodliness, chained up by the iron hand of Cromwell, would now take its full swing, and make ample amends for past deprivations. The Puritans, called so derisively from their purity of principle and conduct, were hooted down, and driven from society as disturbers of the public peace” (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 334).

“Alas, do not many prop up themselves in some earthly thing, as if there were no God in Israel to be sought unto; strengthening themselves in their own righteousness, as if there were no Mediator . . . I am sore afraid that most of the knowledge of God and Christ we have in this age (1670) is a mere notion of faith without value, like a ring without the diamond” (S. Charnock, Vol. 4, p. 58). In his dedication of

George Swinnock's "The Beauty of Magistracy," Thomas Hall, addressing "All the prudent, zealous, and magnanimous Magistrates, Judges, and Gentry in England, Scotland, and Ireland, in September, 1659, began: 'My Lords, and Gentlemen—The dedication of this treatise was intended for the Parliament, but that being dissolved, it most properly falls to you, who are, under God, the pillars of the state. *Such is the corruption of the times* we live in, that we are put to dispute every inch of the way with enemies of truth—Magistracy, ministry, Sabbaths, sacraments, Trinity, Scriptures: all things are now questioned, nothing believed or practiced by many' " (Swinnock's Works, Vol. 4, p. 147).

"How is this land filled with sin, yea, with the worst of sins, against the Holy One of Israel. Hell seems to be broken loose, and men try to exceed, and excel one another in all kinds of wickedness. Oh the scarlet sins that are now to be found under many scarlet robes! [Romanist Bishops.] Oh the black transgressions that are now to be found under many black cassocks! [Priests.] Oh the new-found oaths, the hellish blasphemies, the horrible filthiness, and abominable debaucheries that are committed daily in the face of the sun! How shameless, how senseless are sinners grown in these days! Sin everywhere now appears with a whore's forehead. What open opposition does Christ meet with in His Gospel, offices, members, ways, worship, and works! How does all iniquity abound, and how bold and resolute are multitudes now in dishonouring of God, in polluting His ordinances, in destroying their own souls, and in treasuring up of wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:5)! But the worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be; the more profane the age is wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be" (T. Brooks, 1650, Vol. 4, p. 364).

"Wickedness like a flood is like to drown our English world; it begins already to be above the tops of the mountains; it has almost swallowed up all: our youth, our middle age, old age. O debauchery, debauchery, what hast thou done in England! Thou hast corrupted our young men, hast made our old men beasts; thou hast deflowered our virgins, and hast made numerous whores; thou hast made our earth to reel to and fro like a drunkard; it is in danger to be removed like a cottage; yea, it is, because transgression is so heavy upon it, like to 'fall and rise no more' (Isa. 24:20). O that I could mourn for England, and for the sins that are committed therein, even while I see that, without repentance, the men of God's wrath are about to deal with us (Ezek. 9:1, 2). Well, I have written, and by God's assistance shall pray, that this flood may abate in England; and could I but see the tops of the mountains above it, I should think these waters were abating.

"It is the duty of those that can, to cry out against this deadly plague; yea, to lift up their voice as with a trumpet against it, that men may be awakened about it, fly from it, as from that which is the greatest evils. Sin pulled angels out of Heaven, pulls men down to Hell, and overthroweth kingdoms. Who that sees the land in danger, will not set the beacons on a flame? Who that sees the devils as roaring lions continually devouring souls, will not make an outcry? But above all, when we see sin, sinful sin, swallowing up a nation, sinking of a nation, and bringing its inhabitants to temporal; spiritual, and eternal ruin, shall we not cry out, 'They are drunk, but not with wine; they stagger, but not with strong drink; they are intoxicated with deadly poison of sin, which will, if its malignity be not by wholesome means allayed, bring soul and body, estate and country, and all, to ruin and destruction' " (John Bunyan, 1660, from "The Life and Death of Mr. Badman"). And for such faithful witnessing Bunyan was cast into prison.

One of the saddest features of our day is the blatant and almost universal desecration of the Holy Sabbath.

Yet other ages besides ours have been cursed with the same fearful sin. “Men make this their business: they will be rich, and hence it is they are not only unmerciful to themselves in wearing and wasting their own spirits with carking cares, but to such also as they employ; neither regarding the souls or bodies of men: scarce affording them the liberty of the Lord's Day (as has been too common in our Newfoundland employments), or if they have it, yet they are so worn out with incessant labours that that precious time is spent either in sleep or idleness. It is no wonder God gives you more rest than you would have, since that day of rest hath been no better improved. This over-doing hath not been the least cause of our undoing” (John Flavell, 1660, Vol. 5, p. 272). It has long been our own conviction that the frequent spectacle of millions of artisans, in different countries, being out of work, *is a Divine judgment* for so much labour upon His day.

“In these late years how has profaneness, like a flood, broke in upon us on the Lord's Day! And therefore it highly concerns all the profaners of God's Sabbath to lay their hands upon their hearts, and to say, The Lord is righteous, the Lord is righteous, though He has laid our habitations desolate. Who is so great a stranger in our English Israel as not to know that God was more dishonoured on the Sabbath, within and without the walls of London, than He was in all the other six days of the week? and therefore let us not think it strange that such a fire (the terrible fire of London in 1666) was kindled on that day as has reduced all to ashes. What antic habits did men and women put on, on this day! What frothy, empty discourses and intemperance was to be found at many men's tables this day! How were ale-houses, stews, and Moorfields filled with debauched sinners this day! No wonder then if London be laid desolate” (Thomas Brooks, 1667, Vol. 6, p. 114).

We are not unmindful of the fact that some evilly-minded persons may be inclined to turn to a wrong use of what has been advanced, making the same a cloak for their own carnality, arguing that *they* are no worse, nay, not so bad as many who lived in by-gone days. Nor must Christians persuade themselves that they are obliged to swim with the tide, that in view of the degeneracy of our days it cannot be expected that they should be as godly and fruitful as if they had lived during a time of spiritual revival. Let each of us earnestly endeavour to take to heart and turn into fervent prayer those timely words of Thomas Brooks, “The worse the times are, the better every Christian must labour to be; the more profane the age wherein we live, the more holy must we endeavour to be.”

Nor are we unmindful of another danger. In discovering that the evils of our decadent age are but fresh outbursts of those moral and spiritual diseases which have often plagued previous generations, we lose or lessen our horror and sorrow over the wickedness which now stalks through the world. May God graciously deliver us from stoical indifference at the sad sights which now stare us in the face on every hand. God has promised a special blessing to those who “sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done” in our land (Ezek. 9:4). Let us seek to drink more deeply into the spirit of Him who wept over Jerusalem. Finally, let us marvel and adore the infinite patience of Him who “bears with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”—A.W.P.

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### CONSCIENCE.

#### 1. Its Nature and Origin.

There is in man, as man—as the creature of God—a “moral sense,” as it is called; a faculty of perception of moral quality in whatever comes into the field of view. This, of course, was his before the Fall; indeed, without it, a fall would not have been possible. He would have been a mere beast, for which it is impossible to be *immoral*, just because it is *unmoral*—with no capacity of moral perception or reflection at all. Such a being could not *fall*. “Man that is in honour, and *understandeth* not”—here spoken clearly, not of rational, but of moral discernment—“is like the beasts that perish” (Psa. 49:20). That is the character of the beast, then. Had man gained by the Fall a moral sense, it would have been really in the phrase of a modern infidel, a “fall upward”; it would have brought him into a higher condition than that in which he was created.

When God said of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, “Thou shalt not eat of it; for in the day that thou eatest thereof, thou shalt surely die,” this was surely not to be understood by Adam as a mere consequence which would follow a certain course, a mere appeal to self-love, and no more! Had it been so, and he had merely understood it as an alternative proposed to him, he might have chosen the alternative, however fatal, yet without sin. But in this case “thou shalt not” could not have been said: the prohibition would have sunk into mere advice. Sin could not then have been, nor fall possible. The innocence in which man stood—as made “upright” (Eccl. 7:29)—was not the immaturity of a babe which we call such. To

confound the reality of innocence in upright Adam with the shadow of it only in the fallen creature would be to accuse the Creator and make the record of the Fall an unintelligible mystery.

What, then, does the knowledge of good and evil, as acquired in the Fall, imply? For it is of this that the very name of the prohibited tree speaks: it is this that the serpent proposed, “ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil”; and it is this that the Divine Word after the Fall assures us had resulted: “the man is become as one of Us, knowing good and evil.” What, then, is this knowledge? It is, as all the inspired Word is, put before us to understand, and it will be a gain to us to understand it.

When the prohibition was first given, it is plain it was in a scene where God had pronounced everything, without exception, which He had created, “very good.” Evil there was not anywhere then to be perceived. The faculty of perception did not, of course, create the object to be perceived. Evil there yet was none. I do not mean that angels had not fallen. The whole history assures one that they had. But that did not necessarily introduce it into the world. This was, with all in it, very good; and as such is committed into the hands of man its head. Upon his obedience the condition of all within this realm of his depended. Save through him, evil could not enter; for the presence of the Devil in the serpent was not an entrance in the sense in which I speak of it. Man himself alone could really bring it in.

It may be asked, however, Did not the prohibition itself suppose (and imply the knowledge of) evil as possible, at least? To us, alas! it does; and here, indeed, is the great difficulty for us: how can we put ourselves back into that lost estate of innocence, so as to form any right conception of it at all? Prohibition to us, alas! awakens at once the thought of possible disobedience, and in the fallen nature the lust of it. But Adam had no lust, and no conception as yet of possible disobedience. This need not imply any mental or moral feebleness, but as to the latter (taking all into account), the very opposite.

To know good and evil means simply to discern the difference between these two; but for this to be, the two must be *together* within the field of vision. It was just the perfection of Adam's world that in it there was none, and in himself none. He could abide in good, and enjoy it, without thought of its opposite; a state for us difficult of conception, no doubt, but not impossible to conceive. Gratitude he could have and feel, without thought of ingratitude; believe, praise, love and adore he could, without realizing even the possibility of the opposite of these, and with a moral nature which could yet recognize them immediately if they were presented.

The history of the Fall confirms this. The serpent's first approach is by a question, which under the form of a question of fact, suggests a moral one: “Yea (is it so) that God *hath said*, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?” But to entertain a moral question as to God is fatal. Implicit confidence in God is gone, and evil is already there known in the soul of her who entertains the question. The woman's answer already shows the consequence of this: “Of the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, and ye shall not touch it, lest ye die”! Here, in her mind the prohibited tree had displaced the tree of life. The prohibition, increased to harshness in the manner of it, is weakened in the certainty of its attending penalty. God's love and truth are obscured in her doubting soul; and the Devil can say, “Surely ye shall not die; for God doth know that in the day ye eat of it your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil.”

Here it should be plain that faith in God, receiving all at His hand, prohibition and all, as good alike, would have foiled the Enemy, and remained master of the field. By faith, from the first, and of necessity, man stood. All dispensations are, in this, alike. The evil that gained entrance into the world began as unbelief in the woman's soul, and this having speedily ripened into the positive transgression, conscience awoke—the inward eyes were opened: they knew evil in contrast with good—knew it in themselves, and their actions show plainly that they did so: “they knew that they were naked, and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves aprons.”

The evil that had come in was in themselves alone, for of moral evil alone is capable. And thus the moral perception in man is become a judgment of good and evil in himself, and of himself in view of it: and this is *conscience*. There is always in it a reference to one's self. It is always, as it were, testifying to our nakedness. It is the inheritance of fallen Adam's children, to whom innocence is no longer possible: a watch set upon us by God as under His just suspicion. It is the knowledge of good and evil as found in one who has obtained it by disobedience.

Yet how the grace of God to man shines out already here! “The man is become as one of Us, to know good and evil.” How significant in its connection with that eternal purpose which was even then, when these words were spoken, beginning to be declared! A return to innocence was indeed impossible, but, holiness might yet be, if Divine love so willed. And thus out of the ruin of the first, a new creation yet more glorious was indeed to spring.

## 2. Its Office and Character.

It is evident, and easy to see, that conscience *reveals* nothing. It simply declares the character of whatever is presented, and that according to the light it has. As the eye is the light, only as it is the *inlet* of light, to the body, so the conscience is simply the *inlet* of whatever light morally there may be for the spirit. And just as disease may, to any extent, affect the bodily eye, so may it affect also the spiritual. Alas! the solemn consideration is that sin has thus affected, to a greater or lesser degree, the consciences of all men. Yet in none, perhaps, is it altogether darkened, and its power will manifest itself often in the most unexpected and striking way in those who, notwithstanding, resist to the last its convictions.

The scribes and Pharisees, plotting to entrap the Lord by the case of the adulteress condemned by Moses' law, are thus driven out of His presence by the simple yet penetrating words, “He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). Conscience in Herod sees in Christ the murdered Baptist risen from the dead (Mark 6:16). Stephen's adversaries, on the other hand, rush into murder, cut to the heart by the conviction that they have resisted the Holy Spirit (Acts 7:54). Thus, in the midst of the most frantic opposition to the Truth, nay, *by* this, the power of the Truth over the conscience is clearly shown.

Scripture declares it in doctrine as well as example—“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. But he that doeth truth

cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest that they are wrought in God” (John 3:19-21). Here is the principle of which the example last given is the illustration. The evil-doer is aware of the light when he shuns it; would quench it, if possible, because he is aware of it. In it he is not, because he flees, not welcomes it; yet in fleeing, carries the unmistakable witness of it in his heart.

Again, in the parable of the sower the Lord declares the same thing in another form. Of the seed sown by the wayside He says, “When anyone heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart” (Matt. 13:19). Now this is one apparently quite unconvinced; he does not understand the seed lies merely upon the surface of the ground, inviting the fowls of the air to catch it away. The heart of this man, hard as the roadside with the traffic of other things, if you could say of any that it was untouched by the Word, you could say it here; yet the Lord expressly says, “taketh away that which was sown *in his heart*.” Even here the Word has not only touched, but *penetrated*. The heart, unchanged by it, has rejected it: true, but it has *had* to reject it. Satan is allowed to remove the Word, and it is taken away: but its rejected witness will come up in terrible memory at another day.

And this exactly agrees with the words of the Apostle: “But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are perishing: in whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which *believe not*, lest the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them” (2 Cor. 4:3, 4). Here again the unbelief which refuses the Gospel shuts the unbeliever up into the enemy's hand. The blinding of the mind by the god this world, like the removal of the seed by the fowls of the air, is the direct result of this first rejection of unwelcome testimony.

How immensely important, then, to the soul, is the treatment it accords to whatever it has to own as truth. As little or as much as it may seem to be! God is the God of Truth; and, where souls are themselves true, the possession of any portion of it is the possession of a clue-line which leads surely into His presence; the giving it up is the deliberate choice of darkness as one's portion. And this applies in measure to everyone, sinner and saint alike, and to every truth of revelation. Every truth really bowed to in the soul leads on to more; every error received requires, to be consistent with it, the reception of more. It is darkness; and darkness is a kingdom, as the light is—part of an organized revolt against God. As the truth leads to and keeps us in His presence, so error is, in its essence, departure from Him.

[To be continued in June issue.]

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1938

### CONDITIONS IN THE PAST.

It will be observed that most of the quotations in the previous article were taken from writers of the seventeenth century, that is, when Puritanism was in its heyday. If, then, during the time that sound preaching and vital godliness flourished most in these favoured Isles, wickedness also held high carnival, why should it be thought strange that in our day—when faithful preaching and personal piety are at a discount—sin is in the saddle and lawlessness abounds on every side? But to continue our review of conditions in the past. Bad as the seventeenth century was, the eighteenth was far worse. No human pen can adequately depict the moral degeneracy and the spiritual stagnation of its first five decades. Page after page might be filled with quotations from the few men of God who lived then. A brief selection must suffice.

Upon the abdication of James II, Prince William of Orange was invited to occupy the English throne, for the surer establishment of Protestantism. Describing the assembling of the English gentry to welcome him to London, Lord Macauley wrote, “The attractions must have been great, for the risks of the journey were not trifling. The peace had, all over Europe, and nowhere more than in England, turned crowds of soldiers into marauders. Several aristocratic equipages had been attacked, even in Hyde Park. One day the British mail was robbed, another day the Dover coach. On Hounslow Heath a company of horsemen with masks over their faces watched for the great people who had been to pay their court to the King at Windsor.

“There are few periods in the history of the world that have been marked by deeper spiritual darkness than

the commencing part of the eighteenth century. From 1700 to 1750 seemed to have lapsed into lifeless formality, and this, together with the matured abominations of Popery, opened the way for that tide of infidelity of which the French Revolution was the manifested result. The latter part of the eighteenth century was, through the Lord's great mercy, marked by a very decided revival of evangelical truth. The effect of the writings and preachings of Whitefield, Romaine, Newton, and others, was widely felt in Europe and America" (B. W. Newton, "Aids to Prophetic Enquiry," first series, p. 3).

"The darkest period which the church of God in this country has ever seen since the Reformation was in the reign of Queen Anne. Dissent had obtained a legal footing at the Revolution of 1688. From that era commenced the decline of vital religion till the time of Whitefield. The eighteenth century arose in the thickest cloud that has overspread this country since Popery fell. We live, it is true, in a day of much spiritual declension; but *things were much worse then*. Nearly all the Dissenting churches were sunk into Arianism (which denied the Godhead both of Christ and the Holy Spirit). Little else but dead morality was heard in pulpits where free grace was formerly proclaimed. Religion, in fact, had sunk so low that when Whitefield went about proclaiming the new birth, it was a doctrine as new to the Dissenters as to the adherents of the National Establishment. A national religion was the order of the day, and as much preached in the chapel as in the church" (The Gospel Standard, 1852, p. 336).

"Another thing wherein the state of things is altered for the worse from what it was in the times of the Reformation, is the prevalency of licentiousness in principles and opinions. There is not now that spirit of orthodoxy which there was then; there is very little appearance of zeal for the mysteries and spiritual doctrines of Christianity; and they never were so ridiculed and held in contempt as they are in the present age, and especially in England, the principal kingdom of the Reformation. In that kingdom, those principles on which the power of godliness depends, are in a great measure exploded; and Arianism and Socinianism, Arminianism and Deism, are the things which prevail and carry almost all before them. History records no age wherein there was so great an apostasy of those who had been brought up under the light of the Gospel to infidelity; never was there such a casting off of Christianity and all revealed religion, never any age when it was so much scoffed at and the Gospel of Christ ridiculed" (Jonathan Edwards, Vol. 1, p. 471). Nor were conditions, generally, any better in the U.S.A. at that period.

"Surely the Lord has a controversy with this land; and there hardly can be a period assigned in the annals of the ages, when it was more expedient or seasonable for those who fear Him to stir up each other to humiliation and prayer than at present. What is commonly called our National Debt is swelled to an enormous greatness. It may be quickly expressed in figures; but a person must be something versed in calculation to form a tolerable idea of accumulated millions. But what arithmetic is sufficient to compute the immensity of our National Debt in a *spiritual* sense? or, in other words, the amount of our *national sins*? The spirit of infidelity, which, for a time, distinguished comparatively few, and, like a river, was restrained within narrow bounds, has of late years broken down its banks and deluged the land. This wide-spreading evil has, in innumerable instances, as might be expected, emboldened the natural heart against the fear of God, hardened it to an insensibility of moral obligation, and strengthened its prejudices against the Gospel. The consequence has been that profligate wickedness is becoming almost as universal as the air we breathe and is practiced with little more reserve or secrecy than the transactions of common business, except in such instances as would subject the offender to the penalty of human laws. O the

unspeakable patience of God!

“The multiplied instances of impiety, blasphemy, cruelty, adultery, villany, and abominations not to be thought of without horror, under which this land groans, are only known to Him who knoweth all things. There are few sins which imply greater contempt of God, or a more obdurate state of mind in the offender, than *perjury*, yet the guilt of it is so little regarded, and temptations to it so very frequent, that perhaps I do not go too far in supposing there are more deliberate acts of perjury committed amongst us than among the rest of mankind taken together. Though some of the Roman poets and historians have given very dark pictures of the times they lived in, their worst descriptions of this kind would hardly be found exaggerated if applied to our own. But what are the sins of heathens, if compared with the like evils perpetrated in a land bearing the name of Christian, favoured with the Word of God, the light of the Gospel, and enjoying the blessings of civil and religious liberty and peace in a higher degree, and for a longer continuance, than was afforded to any people of whose history we have heard?” (John Newton, Vol. 1, p. 197).

In his “Foolish Virgins Described,” William Huntington (1797) wrote, “We have more need to fear a certain army in the bowels of our own country, than all the combined forces on the frontiers (i.e. of Napoleon) . . . the daily elopement of women from their husbands, and the unclean spirit of whoredom that so universally reigns and rules among the higher classes . . . Another thing I fear is the threatened stroke of judgment upon *the oppressor*. The last hard frost gave the coal merchant his opportunity to grind the face of the poor to the utmost, which will never be forgotten by the days of this generation. The year following, the whole staff of life was confined in the hands of the farmer, the monopolist, and the miller, who exhibited such hardness of heart, covetousness, and cruel oppression, as is not to be found in the annals of history” (Vol. 2, p. 568). So that “cornering” of food and unjust “profiteering” is no new thing.

Spiritual conditions in Scotland at this same period may be readily visualized from the following quotation. “The darkness of a dead, blasted, profane, or ignorant ministry prevails upon the withholding of the lamp of God's Anointed. Indeed God may leave something in the land called the Gospel, and a set of men who call themselves ministers of the Gospel. But what sort of a lamp is it that is left, when the true Gospel lamp is taken away? It is the Devil's lamp; it is not the narrow way, but a broad-way lamp, to set folk straightway to the bottomless pit. And what sort of ministers or lamp-bearers are left? Why, they are blind guides leading the blind, and both fall into the ditch together” (Eb. Erskine, Vol. 2, p. 285).

Perhaps the reader would inquire, Do you, then, wish to make out that conditions now are better, or at least no worse, than they were in the past? That expression “the past,” dear friend, is entirely a relative one. It all depends upon the unit of comparison. We are certainly not so mad as to argue that things now wear a more favourable appearance than they did a generation ago. No indeed, we freely grant and sadly acknowledge that during the past fifty years there has been a most decided and terrible deterioration, both spiritually and morally, and that not locally or provincially, but universally. The law winks at many things today which had been punished before the War. The press smiles upon things now which it had not dared to do then. The rank and file of the public countenance today was formerly condemned by all decent people. Professing Christians are no longer shocked by sights which once horrified them.

But what does the degeneracy and wickedness of our generation prove? That the end of the age is certainly

upon us? By no means. That evil is more rampant today than it has ever been before? Certainly not: the testimony of history proves otherwise. Conditions *are* far worse than they were fifty years ago, yet, in many respects, they are not nearly so bad as they were two hundred years ago. Things generally were in an awful state during the first half of the eighteenth century, but even *they* were better than much which obtained before the Reformation, during the Dark Ages. All of this simply serves to illustrate what we said in our first article: there is *an ebb and flow of the tide*—manifest throughout the history of Israel in Old Testament times; equally evident during the course of this Christian era. What is coming next? We know not. No man knows. Only fools will prophesy. Whether God will soon graciously grant a widespread revival or whether He will let loose the bolts of His judgment, remains to be seen.

This very imperfect review of Conditions in the Past would lack anything approaching completeness if we failed to notice some of the *physical judgments* which, from time to time, God has sent upon men's wickedness. Our special object in here referring to these is to protest against our "Signs-of-the-Times" men, who magnify out of all proportion and historical perspective such phenomena when they occur in our own days. If some terrible calamity happens, bringing with it great loss of life and destruction of property, and especially if such calamities quickly follow one another (for they rarely come singly) scaremongers and lovers of the sensational declare that nothing like it has ever happened before, and that such things "prove" the coming of the Lord is at our very doors. But "There is *no* new thing under the sun." These very calamities have occurred all through human history.

"We have been visited with famines, earthquakes, pestilence, inundations, thunder and lightnings in winter, and most strange and unseasonable weather; but alas, all these have taken no effect: where is the humiliation, repentance, and reformation which they have wrought? therefore it must needs be there remains behind a great judgment" (William Perkins, 1587, Vol. 3, p. 424).

The earthquakes which have happened in our own lifetime, at San Francisco and Quetta, severe as they were, were mild in comparison with those which occurred at earlier dates. In the opening century of this Christian era the entire cities of Herculaneum and Pompeii were totally destroyed. In more recent times, that at Lisbon, in 1755, to mention no others, resulted in no fewer than fifty thousand people losing their lives. Thomas Brooks (Vol. 6. p. 191) makes reference to a famine in England in 1316 which was so terrible, "that horses, dogs, yea, men and children, were stolen for food; and the thieves newly brought into the jails were torn in pieces and eaten at once, half alive, by such as had been there longer."

Fletcher, the Historian of Salton, tells us that in 1690 conditions were such that, "besides many wretchedly provided for, there were two hundred thousand people, or one fourth or fifth of the total population of Scotland begging from door to door." As recently as 1847 there occurred a most fearful famine in Ireland. "One correspondent from the County of Cork to whom we sent aid, mentions that in his district forty or fifty people die daily, either of famine or of disease produced by famine. The graveyards are full; through the number of the dead and the general distress, coffins cannot be procured" (Gospel Standard, 1847, p. 122). Probably some of our own readers can recall the fearful poverty and suffering in Lancashire in 1867-8, following the closing of all the cotton mills—owing to the Civil War in the U.S.A., when cotton ceased to be shipped from there.

“On one night in the month of August, 1846, a fatal blast traversed the length and breadth of Ireland, the effect of which was that the growing potatoes which, to use the language of an eye-witness, the day before stood up like gooseberry trees, next morning drooped and flagged, and in a few days filled the air with the stench of putrefaction. Men of science bring their microscopes, and talk very learnedly of fungus, and worn-out stock, and improper soil, and over-much moisture; but the leaf blotched in a single night tells its own tale, and proclaims the *air* as the bringer of the corrupting taint. The vial of wrath thus poured into the air, swept off in a single night the food of a nation, and in spite of the noble assistance, publicly and privately, of maligned and ill-requited England, herself suffering under a similar infliction, sent at least a million Irishmen to the grave, either by positive famine or by its invariable and more fatal accompaniments, fever” (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 227).

“When the plague was in London, in 1665, when the Lord, to correct and punish the inhabitants of this kingdom for their national impieties, sent amongst them the most dreadful plague that had been in the memory of man, it was preceded by an unusual drought. The meadows were parched and the highways burnt up: insomuch that there was no food for the cattle, which occasioned, first a murrain among *them*, and then a general contagion among the *human* species, which increased in the city and suburbs of London, till eight or ten thousand died in a week. The richest inhabitants fled to the remotest countries; but the calamities of those who stayed behind, and of the poorer sort, are not to be expressed. Trade was at a full stand; all the commerce between London and the country entirely cut off, lest the infection should be propagated thereby. Nay, the country housekeepers and farmers dared not entertain their city friends and neighbours or relations who came from London, till they had performed quarantine in the fields or outhouses. If a stranger passed through the neighbourhood, they fled from him as an enemy. In London the shops and houses were quite shut up, and many of them marked with a red cross, and an inscription over the doors, 'Lord, have mercy on us!' Grass grew in the streets, and every night the bellman went his round with a cart, crying, 'Bring out your dead' ” (S. E. Pierce's Letters, Vol. 1, p. 80). This dreadful plague was followed by a four day's fire in London (1666) so devastating that it destroyed 89 churches and 13,200 houses.

When the Revolution occurred in Russia twenty years ago, [1917] and also in the early days of the present conflict in Spain, sensationalists announced in the most extravagant terms that nothing like it had ever happened before. But those with the merest smattering of history would know that the Reign of Terror in France when the streets of Paris literally ran with blood at the close of the eighteenth century, witnessed that which was equally atrocious and on a far vaster scale. In his Annual-Fast sermon, Nathaniel Emmons said, “From January 1789 to October 1795 the number of slain and banished in France amounted to 2,152, 979.” He added, “Since that period there have been five years of internal revolution and foreign wars, carried on with infinite waste and havoc in Holland, along the Rhine, in Switzerland, in the Pyrenean frontiers of Spain, in every part of Italy, in England, in Syria.” Well did he conclude, “Human nature has been the same in all nations and in all ages.”

Nor were sensationalists in those days slow to avail themselves of such material, and “students of prophecy” turned prophets themselves, announcing that such Divine judgments were the immediate precursors of the return of Christ. The same occurred again in 1848 during the Chartist riots in England—“Who does not remember that memorable day, April 10, 1848, when London, commercial,

political, and aristocratical, trembled to its very centre at the Chartist procession: when the Bank of England was armed and garrisoned like a fortress, and the greatest general of the age had made his military plans by disposing artillery and soldiers at various points, to drown the threatened insurrection in torrents of human blood” (Gospel Standard, 1854, p. 185). More so, sensationalists were in their heyday during the Crimean War, the Indian Mutiny, and the Civil War in the U.S.A., as anyone can verify for himself, if he has access to books on “The Second Coming of Christ” written at that time.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1938

### CONSCIENCE

#### 2. Its Office and Character.

[Continued from May issue]

Of course the truth may be received merely intellectually, not believingly: and if trifled with, it is no wonder if it results in terrible hardening of the heart. The more orthodox Pharisees were worse persecutors of the Lord than the infidel Sadducees. And the Jews everywhere led the heathen in their early attacks on Christianity. But in these cases it was still rejected truth that stirred up their opposition. But the truth is really and decisively rejected where its claim over the heart and life is allowed in word, and in word only—he who to his father's claim of service said openly, “I will not,” yet afterward repented and went—while he who respectfully answered “I go, sir,” and *never* went.

And this is the character of truth, that it stirs up opposition. It speaks, prophet-like, *for God*, affirming His authority over the soul, and abasing the glory of man in His presence. Unbelief says, as Ahab of Micaiah, “I hate it, for it does not prophesy good of me, but evil.” And even in the believer, it runs counter to all that is not of faith within him; and alas! how much within us is not faith! Thus, among Christians themselves, the truth in any fullness causes many to stumble and at every fresh unfolding of it, some who had followed thus far are left behind: it is even well if they do not become active opponents of it. Thus He who in the angel's announcement brings “peace on earth,” brings in fact, nevertheless, because of man's

condition, “not peace, but a sword.” The fellowship of saints is disturbed and broken up: the thousands drop to hundreds in the very presence of the enemy. Romanism boasts, with a certain reason, of her unity at least in outward organization; while Protestantism proclaims the sanctity of conscience, and divides into a hundred sects!

Yet if conscience be in any respect given up, all is. For its principle is obedience to God, and to God only; and this is a first necessity for a walk with God. Conscience is, above all things, therefore individual. It refuses to see with other eyes than its own; and refuses, too, subjection or guidance without seeing. It will easily incur in this way the reproach of obstinacy, contumacy, pride, self-will; while on the other hand there is constant danger of mistaking these for it. It is thus a thing which all ecclesiastical systems find it difficult to recognize or deal with, and which makes large demands for wisdom, patience, and forbearance with one another. “We see in part; we prophecy in part”: and what we see may seem in ill accord with what is really truth seen by others, just for want of knowledge of a larger truth embracing both. But even if we see not, and but think we see, conscience, because it touches our practical relationship with God, is a solemn thing to deal with: he who meddles with it interferes with God's rights over the soul, and usurps a vicegerency which He commits to no one.

Yet the voice of God, let us carefully remember, conscience is not. It is an ear to hear it only: and which may be dull and deaf, and hear with little clearness after all. God's voice is that which utters itself by the Spirit through the Word. But this voice speaks to the individual, to him that has an ear to hear. None can, but at his peril, resign his responsibility in this to another; and none can, but at his peril, require this to be done. Yet, alas! how often, in various ways, consciously and unconsciously, is this required and yielded to!

### 3. Purged and Pure.

“To serve the living God,” the conscience must first of all be “purified from dead works” (Heb. 9:14). A soul alarmed on account of sin, is driven by conscience into an effort to escape from the wrath which it foresees as the necessity of Divine holiness. In an awakened condition, not so much conscience drives from God, as the heart, estranged, refuses One in whom it finds no pleasure. Its pleasure is in banishing Him, if possible, from the thought: aye, terrible as it is to realize, sin as sin, an offense to Him whom it counts an enemy, is a real pleasure. Many, it is true, are quite ignorant of this, and would resent the imputation of it; for the heart is deceitful above all things, as it is desperately wicked, and who can know it? But when we wake up to realize our condition, we shall assuredly begin to realize it to be so, and none who has been truly brought to God, but will own with the Apostle, the remarkable example of it, that “when we were *enemies*, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son.”

When awakened, the holiness of God is seen as necessary wrath against sin; and then effort begins to secure shelter from it. And naturally this takes the shape of an attempt to keep those commandments of God, hitherto despised and broken. Ignorant of how complete the ruin sin has caused—ignorant of the unbending requirements of God's holiness—ignorant of the grace which has provided complete atonement, the soul persists (often for how long!) in trying to bring to God some fruit that He can accept, and which will secure, or help to secure, the one who brings it. But this is only “dead works.” It is neither “work of

faith” nor “labour of love.” It is self-justification, the fruit of fear and unbelief; hence truly called “*dead works*,” the mere outside of holiness at the best, with no life—no inward spirit in it to make it acceptable to the “living God.” It is rather itself an offense, and thus a necessary defilement of the soul.

The blood of Christ therefore it is that purifies the conscience from dead works. Justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Brought to God, and to God known in Him, there is “no more conscience of sins” in the rejoicing worshipper. Free from the load of guilt, he is able to welcome the light fully and without reserve—yea, with eager desire. The yoke of Christ is rest and freedom. Thus the apprehension of grace delivers from a morbid self-occupation to enable one for real holiness. The conscience is purified so as faithfully to receive, without partiality or distortion, the communications of the Father's will. “The fruit of the *light* is in all goodness and righteousness and truth” (Eph. 5:9).

And if that were all, how blessed—how wholly blessed would be this condition! “Light is good” indeed, “and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun.” If in this all nature rejoices, how the new nature in that which is the “light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”! Thus the fruit of the light is found in this eternal day and summer of the soul.

From the side of God there is no more need of change or variation. His grace is perfect; His gifts and calling are without repentance. Here, in the enjoyment of its own things, the soul is called to abide; here all its own interests summon it to abide. What might be expected then but continual growth in grace and the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ? Alas! that this rightful expectation should be so little fulfilled: but in whom is it perfectly fulfilled? in how many do we see almost the opposite of it, retrogression instead of progress?! And how many are there who remain apparently almost stationary, although in reality of course with loss of zeal and fervour, year after year?! What is the cause of all this, which we find acknowledged in apostolic times as in the present? For the Galatians were no solitary exception of those who “did run well,” being hindered from steadfast obedience to the truth. At Rome, those whose faith had once been “spoken of throughout the whole world” we find testified of by the same witness as all seeking their own, and not the things of Jesus Christ (Rom. 1:8; Phil. 2:21). And later he says of them, “at my first answer no man stood with me, but all forsook me” (2 Tim. 4:16). Corinth went into worldliness and immorality. Ephesus left its first love. Of some of these it may be pleaded that it is assemblies that are spoken of, not individuals, but the two ordinarily go together, and the magnitude of the departure shows that the plea can hardly avail. The general fact is as plain as it is intensely solemn.

But the decay of the fruits of faith means the decay of faith itself. And this decay of faith, whence does it proceed but from failure to maintain the purity of conscience? In the case of some, (who had, no doubt, got far away) the Apostle argues thus: “Holding faith and a good conscience, which (i.e., the latter), some having put away, concerning *faith* have made shipwreck” (1 Tim. 1:19). It is easy to show how heresies and false doctrines, and the reception of these by others, spring from a conscience defiled; but this is not now my point. For simplicity of faith itself, a good conscience must be maintained. As another Apostle says, “If our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things; beloved, if our heart condemn us not, *then* have we confidence toward God” (1 John 3:20, 21). And so the Lord, in view of Peter's grievous fall, and the natural result of it, assures him, “I have prayed for thee, that thy *faith fail not*” (Luke 22:32). How vital, then, to the whole spiritual condition is the maintenance of a pure conscience!

But again, this pure conscience can only be maintained by exercise. “Herein do I *exercise* myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men” (Acts 24:16). And how many mistake—how easy, therefore, is it to mistake—a conscience dulled by neglect, for one that is really “good”! How many persuade themselves all is well with them, while they are simply not near enough to God to detect the evil! “As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord,” we are admonished, “walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). This alone is the Christian “rule” (Gal. 6:16), and that is alone a good conscience which keeps to the measure of this. Yet how easy to have the theory, nay, in some respects, the faith of where we are, without this becoming the real measure for conscience of practical walk!

In the sanctuary, with God alone, we find the light in which things take their true shape and character. In Israel's sanctuary of old, the light of common day was jealously excluded. The light of the golden candlestick guided the priests alone in their daily sacrifice. For us, the light of the holiest is that of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. And in this, things look very differently, indeed, from the mere common light in which the natural conscience views them. Yet many Christians are able to be at peace with themselves merely because they are judging themselves by a standard little beyond the common use. They even ignorantly bring in the grace of God to quiet the stirring of self-accusation, which they suppose is legality, and go on in a careless dream, as far as possible removed from the peace of communion—“peace of Christ.” But the Apostle was not legal when he said, “Wherefore labour, that whether present or absent, we may be acceptable to Him” (2 Cor. 5:9, Greek), nor in his exercise to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.—F.W. Grant.

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### REPROACHES IMPROVED.

In his sermon on Psalm 119:39, Thomas Manton pointed out that though reproaches are a great and grievous affliction to the saint, yet he is to discern *God's* hand in them. Reproaches come not by chance, but are a necessary part of God's disciplinary dealings with His people: sent to humble, prove, and purge them. Our enemies intend us harm by them, but we should receive good by this as by every affliction. When God suffers others to judge and misjudge us, it is to awaken us *to self-judging*. Attend to this, and we be no losers by reproaches. Many times the voice of a slanderer will do for us that which the voice of a preacher cannot do. The renowned Puritan then went on to specify some of the believer's sins which God visits with the sharp affliction of bitter reproaches and slanders. What follows is a quotation from his sermon.

1. *Pride*. There is a twofold pride: pride in mind, which is called self-conceit; and pride in affections, which is called vain-glory. Now there is no such effectual cure as reproaches for either of these. (1) To speak of the pride in mind, *self-conceit*. We are very apt to be puffed up for our doing and suffering for God—poor empty bladders are soon puffed up—and think ourselves somebody if there be but a little self-denial; as Peter said, “Master, we have left all and followed Thee” (Matt. 19:27). He was conceited over what he had left for Christ. What had he left? A net, a fish-boat; it was a great *all* indeed! We are easily puffed up if we suffer a little for God, and the Lord entrenches us in our worldly conveniences, for self-conceit may grow out of self-denial. Too often we find it so. Pride is a sin that grows out of mortification of other sins; it lives in us while we live in the body, therefore it is called “the pride of life” (1 John 2:16).

Some compare it to a shirt: that garment is last put off. It is the most inward and nearest to the soul, and out of the conquest of other sins there ariseth pride.

Now if we have been too self-conceited the Lord will humble us, either by permitting us to fall into such scandals as may remind us of our frailty, and what unworthy weak creatures we are in ourselves; sometimes by taking off the restraints of His grace and of His Spirit, and permitting us to fall. Austin is bold in saying it is profitable for proud men to fall sometimes into open sin, that they may know and understand themselves. He speaks it upon the occasion of Peter, when he was boasting of his own strength, “Though all men leave Thee, yet will not I.” How foully did he fall! Ay; but at other times God uses more merciful dispensations, for He doth not let His people fall into those grievous sins but upon great provocation. Usually at other times He lets loose the tongues of virulent men to lessen us in our own opinion and in the opinion of the world. Now, however innocent we be of the crimes charged upon us, yet in all these cases we must look upward and inward.

Upward—this is not without God: He is the end of causes; He could blast these tongues, and stop them at His pleasure; the Lord can “keep us from the strife of tongues” (Psa. 31:20). But now, when He permits this, His hand must be owned: look upward, “I will bear the indignation of the LORD, because I have sinned against Him” (Micah 7:9). At such a time God spits in the faces of His people, and puts us to shame; and therefore we should look upward and see His hand in it all. And look inward; there you will see such a sink of sin as deserves this and much more; and therefore a sense of our sinfulness in other things will make us more submissive to the Lord's correcting hand. If we do not look to *that* we will be drawn into reviling for reviling. Many times our graces do as much hurt as our sins. Self-conceit the Lord will mortify one way or other.

(2) For *Vain-glory*, the other sort of pride, valuing esteem too much, and our credit in the world, and pleasing ourselves in the opinion others have of us. We would usurp God's throne in the hearts of men, therefore we are so touchy. Having set a high value upon ourselves, we are troubled when others will not come up to our price. Pride is one of the oldest enemies that ever God had: it was born in Heaven in the breasts of the fallen angels, but God tumbled them out as soon as pride got into their hearts. Now, when His children harbour it, the Lord hath a quarrel with them, and therefore, for giving entertainment to pride He will lay us low: “Lest I should be exalted above measure, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me” (2 Cor. 12:7). There is a great deal to do of what this thorn in the flesh is. Some will have it to be some trouble or sickness. Most probably so, but it takes in many afflictive evils, for in verse 10 he mentions *reproaches*. Paul was too apt to be proud. The Lord made him an eminent instrument; by his faith he had abundance of revelations. But God will prick the bladder: He does it with thorns; and he calls it his infirmity, necessity, reproach. Infirmity, by that I mean some reigning sickness. But reproach was one ingredient. Now lest we should be puffed up by vain conceit, the Lord humbles us with infirmities, necessities, reproaches.

2. Another sin for which God humbles us is *careless walking*. When we are negligent, and do not take notice of the carnality that grows upon us, and the fleshly frame and temper of heart which breaks out into our lives, the Lord suffers others to reproach: then they gather up our filth, that we may see what cause we have to take our ways to heart. Every man that would live strictly has need either of faithful friends or

watchful enemies: either faithful friends to admonish him, or watchful enemies to censure him; they show us the spots in our garments that need to be washed off. Many times a friend is blinded with love, and grows as partial to us as we are to ourselves; will suffer sin upon us and not tell us of it; then the Lord sets spies to watch for our halting (Jer. 20:10), and therefore we need to go to God and pray, “Lord, lead me, in a plain path because of my enemies” (Psa. 27:11). They lie in wait and seek to take us tripping in aught they can. We can no more be without watchful enemies than without faithful friends. How ignorant would a man be of himself if others did not put him in mind sometimes of his failings! Therefore God makes use of virulent persons in the world as a rod to thrash the dust out of our garments.

3. To humble us for *our censuring*. For if we have not been so tender of others' credit, the Lord makes us see the bitterness of the affliction in our own case, by giving us the like measure that we have meted unto others (Matt. 7:1, 2): that is, we shall find others as hardly think of us as we have of them. Good thoughts and speeches of other men are the best preservative of our own good names. God will take care of them that are careful not to judge and censure. And therefore it is no great matter whether the report be true or false, but a Christian is to *examine*, Have not I drawn it upon myself by slandering others? for God usually pays us in our own coin. He that is much given to censuring seldom or never escapes great censure himself. It is said in the Psalms, “Let his own words grieve him,” that is, fall upon him. How do our own words fall upon us? Why, the Lord punishes us for our censuring of others. Oh! then, humble thyself before God for the reproaches thou hast cast upon others: “Take no heed to all the words spoken against thee, lest thou hear thy servant curse thee” (Eccl. 7:21), that is, speaking evil against thee. Hard sayings and speeches of others against us may put us in mind of God's just hand, of measuring to us as we have measured to others; and therefore we should be the more patient if they wrong us; it is but in the like kind that we have wronged others. God will humble us for our censuring, which is so natural and rife, especially with younger, weak, and more unmortified persons.

The Lord buffets by wicked men to make you better. Reproaches are like soap, that seem to defile the linen it cleans. There is nothing so bad but we may make a good use of it, and a Christian may gain some advantage by it. Or as dung which seems to stain the grass, but it makes the ground fruitful, and the grass spring up with a fresher verdure. So reproaches are a necessary help to make us more humble, heavenly, to make us walk with an holy awe. This holy revenge we should take upon our enemies, to make us more strict and watchful. The way is, not to contend for esteem, but to grow more serious, more faithful in our lives; for this is the way to muzzle the mouths of adversaries, as the mouth of a dog or wild beast is (1 Peter 2:15). Passionate returns do but increase sin, but a holy conversation will silence all; and therefore you should confute calumnies, by binding their mouths thereby. An innocent, meek, unblameable, profitable life, will certainly have its due esteem in the consciences of men, do what they can. Therefore be more strict and reproaches will do you good.

A word to those that *devise* reproaches. You hazard the repute of your own sincerity: “If a man seem to be religious, and bridle not his tongue, that man's religion is vain” (James 1:26). Such men, that are seldom at home, rarely look to the state of their *own* hearts. Alas! if they were acquainted with themselves, or their own failings, they would see themselves the worst people in the world. Paul can see himself worse than Judas—I am “the chief of sinners”—because he had a greater feeling of his own case. Now he that is much in judging others is seldom within. If a man had a catalogue of his own faults, he would not be so ready to

blast others, but say, “I am the chief of sinners.” Hypocrites have nothing in them but empty shows and appearances. It is a cheap zeal to let fly (and yet this is the religion of a great many) at the miscarriages and faults of others. No—you should rather study your own.

But must we in no case speak evil of others? I answer, first, be sure that it be not a downright slander. Now, it is hard to avoid that. If the evil you speak be without cause, then it is against truth; if it be for a light and slender cause, then it is against charity; if it be for things indifferent or for lesser failings, the indiscretions and weaknesses of Christians, all this is against that charity which should pass especially between the disciples of Christ: “Speak not evil one of another, brethren” (James 4:11). It is worse in Christians, always to be whispering and speaking evil one of another; you gratify the triumphs of Hell. In things doubtful, you should judge the best; in things hidden and secret, we cannot take cognizance of them—that is God's work. Besides, if there be some grievous fault, you do not know what were their temptations, how it may be alleviated by the temptation; still you must “consider yourselves lest you also be tempted” (Gal. 6:11); and you do not know whether they have repented of it.

Second, speak not *of* him, but *to* him. When men are absent it is not fit they should be judged, for then they are not able to make a defense; then it is backbiting. When you thus speak of them, you exchange a duty for a sin, admonition for reproach. It is an unquestionable duty to admonish one another, but it is an unquestionable sin to speak evil one of another. Third, if of him, it should be with tenderness and grief: “Of whom I have told you often, and now weeping,” saith the Apostle (Phil. 3:18). When they are incorrigible, when they are like to pervert others, and dishonour the Gospel, or the manifest glory of God, Oh! we would but lay restraints on ourselves in this kind, and never speak of others, but when manifestly the glory of God calls for it. Not out of idleness, and for want of other talk, that is tattle, forbidden in many places of Scripture; not out of hatred and revenge, for that is malice—there may be malice where the thing you speak is truth; not to please others, that is flattery. But if ever you speak of them (and it should be with these cautions) it must be out of zeal for the glory of God and the good of the Church. If men did consider what restraints are upon them, they would not so easily fall upon censuring, reproaching, and speaking evil of others.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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August, 1938

### **DATE FIXING.**

We have decided to write, or rather compile, this article, as an appendage to the recent ones on *Conditions in the Past*, that our readers may be furnished with a sample of the thoughts and opinions of men in previous generations respecting the coming of our Lord and the end of the age. Not only hysterical sensationalists, but some of the most sober minded and spiritual servants of God have attempted to draw conclusions and forecast the future from the “signs of the times” which appeared in *their* sky. The state of the world in their day, the corruption and apostasy of Christendom, and the calamitous judgments sent by God on an evil and adulterous generation, convinced them that such things were most certainly the immediate prelude to the appearing of Christ in Person. Others averred that Divine Prophecy intimated the very year in which the Papacy would be overthrown or the Day of Judgment would occur.

“Towards the close of the tenth and at the beginning of the eleventh centuries the passion for pilgrimages was greatly increased by an opinion which prevailed all over Europe—that the thousand years mentioned by John in Revelation 20:2-4 were nearly accomplished, and the end of the world at hand. A general consternation seized the minds of men. Numbers relinquished their possessions, deserted their families and friends, and hastened to the Holy Land, where they imagined Christ would suddenly appear to judge the living and the dead” (From “A History of the Church” by Charles Goodrich, 1835, p. 104). Perhaps some of our readers are inclined to smile at the credulity of those who lived a thousand years ago, but we can assure them that human nature is still the same. The writer is personally acquainted with a lawyer of considerable repute, who thirty years ago was so convinced by “the signs of the times” that the coming of

Christ was at the very doors, that he abandoned all thoughts of provision for old age and gave away his fortune to the promotion of missionary work. Recently, when past three score and ten, he has been obliged to take up again the practice of law to provide for his daily needs. Nor is this by any means an isolated case.

In his work on the Thessalonian Epistles, John Jewel, Bishop of Salisbury, (1583 A.D.), in his comments on 1 Thessalonians 5:1 said, “What may we think then, of them that write books and almanacs, and say such a year and at such a time Christ shall come; and with their fine speeches tray [frighten] and mock the world? These two hundred years past, there have ever been some which have adventured to tell such news. They have appointed many such years, and days; only to give witness to their folly” (p. 123). William Perkins informs us (Vol. 3, p. 473), “A Jew prophesied that in the year 1364 Messiah should come and deliver his own nation,” and that a celebrated astrologer, by the name of Albumazar, “prophesied that in the year of our Lord 1460 an end should be made of the Christian religion.” In his piece on “The End of the World” (which the printer in 1604 says “was written many years ago”) Perkins represents one saying, “All the signs of the coming of Christ are fulfilled: O what terrible earthquakes have there been! what famine! what wars and revolutions among men! what signs in the sun and moon! what flashing in the air! what blasting stars! Surely, surely the world cannot last long” (Vol. 3, p. 470).

In the same piece Perkins went on to quote the following, as something which deeply stirred many in his early days:

“When after Christ's birth there be expired,  
of hundreds fifteen, years eighty and eight,  
Then comes the time of dangers to be feared,  
and all mankind with terrors it shall freight:  
For if the world in that year do not fall,  
if sea and land then perish nor decay:  
Yet empires all, and kingdoms alter shall,  
and man to ease himself shall have no way.”

Again we say, such silly doggerel may now raise a smile (but for many years thousands were terrified by it), yet we well recall that in our early boyhood many in this country were rendered uneasy by the prophecies of “Mother Shipston,” two of which were: “Carriages without horses shall go, and accidents fill the world with woe,” and “The world to an end shall come, in eighteen hundred and ninety one.”

“If any age had cause to think Christ would come, certainly we have. It was not far off in the Apostles' days—they were called 'the last days'; but ours are the very dregs of time. When we see an old man weak and feeble, aches and diseases of the present life increasing upon him, we say, Certainly he cannot live long: so if we look upon the temper of the world, surely it cannot endure long; Christ will come to set all things at rights” (Thomas Manton, Vol. 16, p. 215). Yet almost three hundred years have passed since that able expositor drew his conclusion: and for all we know another three *thousand* years may yet run their course before human history expires.

After referring to a number of different ones who had prophesied the exact year in which Popery was to be totally destroyed, Thomas Goodwin went on to say, “I find also Mr. Mede in his Clavis, to pitch upon 1656, though tacitly and implicitly, yet clearly enough, as the time he is most inclined unto for the expiration of Antichrist's kingdom. For in his 'Synchronisms,' he makes the first trumpet and the Pope's 1260 days to begin together; and in his 'comment' he makes the beginning of the first trumpet to be in the year 395. So that if the reign of Antichrist begins at the year 395 A.D., then his 1260 days or years will end in 1655. And thus there will be so many years from Christ unto the beginning of the new world, as there was from the beginning of the world until the days of Noah, unto which Christ compares His coming, even 1656 years” (Vol. 3, p. 196).

In 1655 the Church of France thus addressed itself to brethren abroad: “Inasmuch as by these overturnings of the world, 'tis visible that its last end *cannot be far off*, and that our long-looked and long-hoped for redemption, and the coming of the eternal kingdom of the Son of God draweth nigh” (J. G. Lorimer, “Protestant Church of France,” 1842, p. 199). In a letter to General Fleetwood, Oliver Cromwell said (August 22, 1653): “If the Day of the Lord be so near, as some say, how should our moderation appear!” (from J. H. D'Aubigne's “Vindication of the Protector,” p. 159).

Well did John Owen (v. 17, p. 552) warn people of his day, “But in the meantime what things may come, I know not. Those who pretend to a clearer inspection into future things may not do amiss to strictly examine the grounds whereon they proceed. For many have been ashamed of their predictions, that within such or such a time the yoke of Babylon (Rome) should be broken.” The only difference in our day is that modern prophets (?) are devoid of shame, for when the flight of time refutes their fancies, instead of acknowledging they were wrong, they manipulate their premises and draw new conclusions, always fixing their dates just a few years in the future, thus keeping their dupes continually on the tiptoe of expectation.

“But this same revelation informs us that it shall not always be so: the time is coming, and *is now just at hand*, when God will destroy the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations, by causing the Gospel to be preached to them all, in giving them a heart to discern and understand the truth. Then 'the light of the moon shall be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun shall be sevenfold, as the light of seven days.' And the eyes of them that see shall not be dim, and the ears of them that hear, shall hearken. The heart also of the rash or foolish shall understand knowledge, and the tongue of the stammerers shall be ready to speak plainly, and the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea” (S. Hopkins, 1772, a contemporary and intimate friend of Jonathan Edwards in New England, Vol. 1, p. 56).

“There are certain very memorable events, the dates of which are peremptorily fixed: as the treading of the Holy City forty-two months, the witnesses prophesying in sackcloth and under discouragements a thousand two hundred and three-score days; during which term of days also the Church is to be nourished in the wilderness even for a time, and times, and half a time; and power is given to the beast, or Antichrist, to continue forty and two months (Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). All which began, and will end together; for these dates are exactly the same; and could we be certain when these dates begin, we should have no difficulty about the expiration of them, or how long it is to be. Good men have been mistaken in their calculations for want of this: however, though we can come at no certainty as to the precise time these

things shall be, yet some degree of understanding of these times may be come at; and from the circumstances of things it may be concluded that these dates cannot reach beyond an hundred and fifty years more, and it may be they may expire much sooner” (John Gill's sermon on Isa. 21:11, 12, preached December, 1750).

“Why cannot you pray along with the faithful for Christ's *speedy* coming? Surely you do not doubt of the fact that He will come to judge the world is as certain as that He did come at the first time to judge the Jewish nation: 'For we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ.' The matter of fact upon Scriptural principles is undeniably clear and certain. Why then are you not so prepared for it as to make it the subject of your prayers? Is it because you put it at a great distance, and therefore think yourselves safe? Consider attentively what the Scripture says upon this point. Our Lord has given us several marks or *signs* of His coming, by which we might know *as certainly* when it was at hand, as we could know when the fig-tree puts forth her green figs that summer is nigh. There were to be wars and rumours of wars, pestilences, earthquakes in divers places, very little true faith left upon the earth, and yet as great security among careless sinners as there was in the days of Noah, when the flood came and swept them all away.

“Do you think these cannot be the forerunners of our Lord's *speedy coming* because there always have been such things in the world? But when all these signs are at once upon the earth, and in a manner they never were before, then they become loud calls to an immediate preparation. Were there ever greater wars, or more rumours of war? Has not an uncommon pestilence raged among the cattle for several years, in this and in other countries? Were there ever such earthquakes, so universal, and of so long continuance, as have been for some years past? And does not the present state of the world as to religion greatly resemble our Lord's description of the men upon whom that day shall come unawares as a thief in the night? And when could the account which St. Paul gives us in several of his Epistles, of the men of the latter times be more true, than it is at present? Have they not the name and form of Christianity without the power of it? Are they not worldly minded, sunk into carnal security, and so entirely influenced by the love of pleasure, that the love of God and of the things of God is not only waxed cold, but quite frozen up?

“Was there ever any age wherein our Lord's words could be more strictly fulfilled, 'When the Son of man cometh shall He find faith on the earth?' By these signs our Lord is alarming a sinful world with notices of His *speedy* coming, and if sinners are not at all alarmed, but continue still secure in their sins, this is a Scripture proof that He will *soon* come as a thief in the night and surprise them: for when they shall say Peace and safety, then sudden destruction shall come upon them, and they shall not escape” (W. Romaine, Discourses on Solomon's Song, 1771, p. 368 to 370). Note well, dear reader, that this most godly man spoke repeatedly of the “speedy coming of Christ” a hundred and fifty years ago!

At the end of his “Notes on the New Testament” (about 1780) John Wesley fixed the following dates for the fulfillment of prophecies in the Revelation: “1614: an everlasting Gospel promulgated (14:6). 1810: the end of the forty-two months of the Beast; after which and the pouring out of the vials, he is not, and Babylon reigns queen (15 and 16). 1832: the Beast ascends from the bottomless pit (17 and 18). 1836: the end of the non-chronos, and of the many kings; the fulfilling of the Word and of the mystery of God; the repentance of the survivors in this great city; the end of the 'little time' and of the three times and a half; the destruction of the Beast; the imprisonment of Satan (19 and 20).”

There seems no need for us to make citations from those who have lived nearer our own times and give quotations from such men as Edward Irving, Richard Baxter, Gratton Guinness and others, who set dates for the destruction of the Papacy, the end of the age, and the appearing of Christ. We could quote from the early writings of the Plymouth Brethren and show that eighty and ninety years ago they were just as convinced that Christ would return in their *own* lifetimes, as many of their followers are today. Nor will we burden the reader by exposing the date-fixing fallacies of the “Seventh Day Adventists,” Russellites, and Christadelphians. Sufficient has been advanced to indicate that throughout the centuries one and another has arisen posing as prophets by forecasting coming events, only for the passage of time to make evident their folly, and to exemplify the fact that “thou knowest not what a day may bring forth” (Prov. 27:1).

And what is the moral to be drawn from all of this? What is the practical lesson—for it is a *practical end* we have had in view, and not the amusing of the curious or the entertaining of those who have an idle hour to pass away. Surely it is this, “For vain man would be wise, though man be born like a wild ass's colt” (Job 11:12): yes, wise in his own conceits, wise above that which God has revealed, wise in the esteem of his fellows. He would pose before others as possessing a spiritual light and discernment which lifts him above the rank and file; he pretends unto light received from the Word which is denied those who walk not so closely with God as *he* does. The Spirit has shown *him* “things to come,” only for the passing of time to demonstrate it was some other spirit than the Spirit of God.

When the disciples asked Christ, “Wilt Thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6), He did not say whether He would or would not, neither did He tell them that they entertained an erroneous conception of “the kingdom.” No, He struck more deeply, and made answer which applies to *all* His followers till the end of time: “It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in His own power” (v. 7). That is definite and it is final. Shun, then, my reader, those who controvert the Son of God by seeking to persuade that you *may*, “know the times and the seasons,” that if you will accept their interpretations (?) of Prophecy you will be granted a spiritual insight into those things of which the world is ignorant. “The coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 3:8): it is ever drawing nearer, but for any man to affirm that the coming of the Lord is *now* at the very doors, is to affirm what Scripture nowhere warrants, and is a piece of bombastic impertinence.

Our pressing duty is to set bounds to an unholy curiosity, and rest content with the blessed fact that the future is entirely in the hands of the Most High. It is the present which limits the boundaries of our responsibility. God is working all things after the counsel of His own will, so that there is no cause for alarm or fear. Not only cannot the forces of evil go one inch farther than what has been Divinely ordained, but, even now, God is making them to subserve His own wise and holy purpose. Nothing we do, or fail to do, will either hasten or retard by a single hour the consummation of God's counsels. “All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28) provides a sure resting-place for the renewed heart.

Speculations about future history are not only futile, but impious. An itching mind that craves information about coming events is a hindrance and not a help to present godliness. Leave the future with God, and seek grace to discharge your *present* duty. Part of our present duty, as well as our precious privilege, is to

be “looking for that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), but that is a vastly different thing from occupying our minds with the *evil* that is at work in the world. To be “looking for that blessed Hope” is entirely an attitude of *the heart*—the soul being engaged with the person of Christ Himself, anticipating that glad moment when He will perfectly conform us to His image. But as to *when* He will appear, the angels in Heaven know not, much less can we on earth ascertain it. To be *prepared for* His coming is the great thing, and not to be curiously prying into the how and when of it.—A.W.P.

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August, 1938

### **HOLINESS.**

“Behold I have longed after Thy precepts; quicken me in Thy righteousness” (Psa. 119:40). Desires set upon holiness are an affection properly exercised, and upon its due object. Desire is an earnest reaching forth of the soul after good absent and not yet attained. The object of it is something good, and the more truly good it is the more is our desire justified. There are certain bastard goods of a base and transitory nature, as pleasure, profit—we may easily overlash, and exceed in these things. But on *holiness*, which is more high and noble, and is truly good, and of great vicinity and nearness to our chiefest good than those others things are, we cannot exceed—there the faculty is rightly placed.

When we are hasty and passionate for those other things, the heart is corrupted, it is hard to escape sin: “He that makes haste to be rich cannot be innocent” (Prov. 28:20); and he that loves pleasure is in danger of not loving God (2 Tim. 3:4). But now in *holiness* there is no such snare: a man cannot be holy enough, nor like enough to God; and therefore here we may freely let out our affections to the full. When our desires are freely let out to other things, they are like a member out of joint, as when the arms hang backward, but here they are in their proper place; this is that which cannot be loved beyond what it doth deserve.

A Christian should set no manner of bounds to himself in holiness for he is to “be holy in all manner of conversation” (1 Peter 1:15), and to be “perfect as our heavenly Father” (Matt. 5:48). And then desire is not only after that which is good, but after a good *absent*. Desire ariseth from a sense of vacuity and

emptiness. Emptiness is the cause of appetite and therefore is compared to hunger and thirst: “Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Matt. 5:6). So it is in desiring holiness, we have not yet attained (Phil. 3:13). There is an indigence and emptiness; we are not already perfect—we want more than we have, and our enjoyments are little in comparison of our expectations, and therefore we should make a swifter progress towards the mark, and with more earnestness of soul should press after that sinless estate we expect.

That little we have doth but quicken us to inquire after more, not cloy but provide the appetite. As a man hath a better stomach sometimes when he doth begin to eat, so when we begin with God, and have tasted of holiness, and tasted of comfort, being brought into a sense of obedience and subjection to God, we should desire more; or certainly he is not good that doth not desire to be better. So that David might well say, “I have longed after Thy precepts.”—Thomas Manton

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### **SAMSON'S RIDDLE.**

“Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness” (Judg. 14:14). It does, at first sight, seem strange, after an announcement from Heaven of his birth, after the coming of an angel to give directions as to his rearing, after being told that the Lord blessed him, and that, “the Spirit of the Lord moved him,” and that he was a true believer, to find that it was muscular power that was Samson's great endowment, and that his passions were so unsubdued. But great strength was just what was needed then, “for at that time the Philistines had dominion over Israel”; and even Samson's strong passions were overruled for the discomfiture of the enemies of his country.

When one thinks of how great, in the view of God, was His scheme of redemption, and of how important to the Church the revelation of it was, we cannot wonder if there should be frequent promises given of Messiah and predictions of His incarnation, death, and kingdom—many typical objects and rites to represent Him, not a few whose lives were emblematical of that of the promised One, and even epochs of history so arranged as to furnish an allegory of the “better things to come.” Anyone who is duly impressed with the greatness of redemption, and who thinks at all according to the mind of God regarding it, cannot wonder if things and men and epochs manifold should be shadowing forth in past ages the fulfillment of the promise of the Redeemer. God could not have been silent regarding Him who, as His only begotten Son, was the object of His infinite love, and who, as Messiah, was the gift of His love to the Church. And He was not silent; for He spoke regarding Him to the Old Testament Church through promises, prophecies, typical rites, and typical men, and through the dealings of His providence with a nation, as

well as with individuals.

One of the typical men was Samson. He was well fitted to represent the Messiah as the “Saviour” whom “God raised unto Israel.” Samson's name means “distinguished” or “strong,” and we may well apply it to him with both these meanings. The Lord made him distinguished, and He made him strong, and He did both that He might exhibit through him His Messiah to His people. In course of his going down for a wife to Timnath, “a young lion roared against him.” “The Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon him,” and “he rent him as he would have rent a kid.” Returning “after a time, he turned aside to see the carcass of the lion; and, behold, there was a swarm of bees and honey in the carcass of the lion.” He himself having partaken of the honey first, gave some of it also to his parents, but how he had procured it he kept as a secret. This secret furnished him with a riddle at the marriage-feast. As no one could taste the sweet meat but those to whom he gave it, so none could solve the riddle to whom he did not unfold its meaning. So far he most fitly typifies Him who came down from Heaven “to seek and to save” the objects of His love, and who encountered “him that had the power of death,” and by death destroyed him, thus securing to His Church both meat and sweetness, for which none shall partake except such as receive these from Him, and the mode of obtaining which none can understand except such as are His disciples. Looking at this riddle as no longer Samson's, but Christ's, let us consider—

(1) This riddle presents to us *the mystery of the Cross*. “God raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus.” He was “manifested to destroy the works of the Devil,” and to procure redemption for a people who were both prisoners and slaves. These two designs could only be accomplished together, and only *by death*. As no meat could come out of the eater unless the eater had been slain, so there could be no redemption to Israel unless Christ, by His death, had destroyed “him that had the power of death.” But the meat was not produced by “the eater,” though it came out of him. The lion was dead, and could not be an “eater,” and only in his dead carcass could the honey be stored by the “swarm of bees” whose work it was to gather it. All that is “meat” and “sweetness” as the result of the “death of death in the death of Christ” is due to the grace of God, which found in Him who died and rose again a place in which the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant might be stored, and a way by which the Holy Spirit might come forth to dispense them.

Let it be no difficulty to your mind to think of a living Samson while looking on the dead lion. Samson only risked his life, while Christ actually laid His down. Yet do not think that you have in this what utterly unfits the one for being an emblem of the other. The actual death of Christ *only secured redemption by destroying* “him that had the power of death.” But I see a living High Priest beside the slain sacrifice, who can present Himself as “the Lamb that was slain” before God. And I have before me Him who was dead, alive again, and “alive forevermore,” to dispense to the objects of His love the blessings of the covenant which He sealed by His blood. What was awaiting in his encounter with the Lion to complete Samson's representation of Christ in His actual dying “for the ungodly,” was made up by the mode in which he willingly sacrificed his life at the last that enemies of Israel might perish through his death.

Think of all the “meat” and “sweetness” secured by the death of Christ to redeemed Israel—the infinite fullness of God's covenant grace brought nigh by the Gospel in which Christ crucified is preached. What a honeycomb that is which is near us in the Gospel, each one of the “exceeding great and precious promises”

a cell full—fraught with the rich grace of God! All this is brought near to you, and may be claimed by you if you reach Christ crucified in faith, and take your stand as a sinner on His precious blood. But you require a living Christ to secure to you any benefit from His death. Samson's parents tasted the honey only when their son gave it to them. And what he procured by risking his life he gave ungrudgingly. Is not Christ's love worthy of more trust than Samson's? Count it no hardship that you must owe to the gracious power of the living, the enjoyment of what was secured by the atonement of the slain Lamb.

To partake of the grace of the blood-sealed covenant would secure to you both “meat” and “sweetness”: both what would strengthen and what would gladden you. Entering through the death of Christ amidst the riches of the grace of God, you would attain to a child's confidence towards the grace of God: and you would be no coward in the conflict to which the soldiers of Jesus Christ are called. As a child, as a servant, and as a soldier, you need both “meat” and “sweetness,” and “the eater” and “the strong” would yield both to you, if through “the blood” you reached the grace “of the Everlasting Covenant.”

(2) This riddle may be viewed as referring to *the blessed results of affliction to the Lord's children*. These encounter “eaters” and are called to combat with “the strong.” This is their frequent experience as they bear the various trials of providence, as they endure persecution from the world, as they are engaged in conflict with the strong corruption of their old hearts, and as they are assaulted by the power of “the wicked one.” All these are painfully felt to be “eaters” and “strong.”

But all these trials have in them *no destroying power*. The entire removal of the curse has made the children of God indestructible. The death of Christ effected the removal of the curse from them when that death was, in the day of their justification, placed to their account by God. Trouble is no longer armed with the curse to them. It may smite them so as to pain them, but it cannot smite them so as to slay them. I could easily conceive a very nervous person trembling at the sight of a dead lion. It could do him no harm, for it was utterly dead, and it was utterly unreasonable to be afraid because near it. Just as little reason has the child of God to be afraid of all the troubles which he may have to encounter; but how often does he tremble when he comes near to them. Friend, you will never get rid of that cowardice but at the Cross of Christ, on which the curse was utterly exhausted in the death of your Surety. As you appropriate Him, and redemption through His blood, all troubles will appear as thoroughly powerless to harm you as was the carcass of the slain lion in the vineyard of Timnath.

The afflictions of the righteous are not only powerless to harm, *but they are made profitable*. Thus they cannot be without the grace of God. If there were no honey in the carcass of the lion, there could not come “meat” and “sweetness” out of it. But through the death of Christ grace comes to the believer in his time of trial, and it is because of this that “tribulation worketh patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” Because of this, instead of being scared by tribulation on account of the pain it causes, he glories in it on account of the good fruit it produces. It yields to him “meat” and “sweetness” to which, without affliction, he would have been an utter stranger.

(3) The riddle points to *the death of the saints*. How often, when looking forward to it, does it seem to be an “eater” ready to devour, and a “strong” one before whom all shall be laid low? An “eater,” verily, is death if armed with sin as its “sting”; and “strong” is the “eater,” for its power shall bring all the Christless

down into the depths of an eternal Hell. Ah, friend, if you are away from the Cross of Christ you have no right to be aught else than afraid before it. But if you, with the eye of faith, see death deprived of its sting by the death of the Cross, and can grasp Him who “died and rose again” with the hand of faith, then you may expect to taste ineffable sweetness in the result of your dying. For what does death yield to the believer?

1. *An end to all the troubles of this life.* These often were felt to be downing floods, as they went down into them, and seemed to be a sea without a further shore. To their eyes there seemed to be a haze on the horizon, towards which their gaze was directed, which made it impossible for them to discern aught but sea. They often feared that the time would never come, in which to them there shall be “no more sea.” But passing through death the believer passes beyond the reach of all the trials of this life. Nothing does he carry with him that can disturb, and none to trouble him shall either accompany or follow him.

2. In death there shall be *a final end of all sin.* It is not by his own death that sin shall be annihilated in the soul of the believer, but in his dying, the Lord's sanctifying power shall pass through all his being, consuming into utter extinction all sin, till the soul, perfectly conformed to the image of Christ, shall pass into a region in which there shall be no temptation, and where God, in the unchangeableness of His love, in the glory of His holiness, and in the omnipotence of His power, shall compass him to preserve him in the beauty of His own likeness, and in the bliss of His own fellowship for evermore. You need not shrink, believer, from parting with the body of dust that is on you, for you shall, at the same moment, part with the body of death that is *in* you. O what shall it be to emerge out of the wearying and wearied body with an *understanding* in which there shall no more be darkness, a *will* that never shall for a moment, or in the least degree, decline from the of God, a *conscience* which shall be for evermore under the full sunshine of God's manifested favour, a *memory* that shall recall aught that it shall not be joy to remember, and a *heart* in which perfect love to God shall sway every spring of action, and whose every desire shall be filled with the expressed love and with the outshining glory of Jehovah! Let the living body become a carcass if this sweetness is to follow the dying.

3. To pass through death *is to enjoy all the sweetness of the home-rest, of the temple-worship, and of the palace-glory of Heaven.* What home-rest it shall be to be near to the Man Christ Jesus, the Lamb who was slain, the good Shepherd who graciously tended His flock throughout all the wilderness way, and to have nothing within or near that can mar the joy of this fellowship! How perfected love will then go forth, fervently and adoringly, in a service in which there can be no shortcoming, as it is attracted by the glory that shall shine on it forever from “the throne of God and of the Lamb”! And what eternal wonder shall fill thy soul, believer, as thou find thyself at home amidst the glory of the Father's house—a palace adapted to the presence of Jehovah on His eternal throne.

Application 1. Let all remember that death has to be encountered, either as it meets those who are in the Lord, or as armed with the sting of sin, and clothed with all the terrors of the curse. If you are not in Christ, death will be as the living lion roaring for his prey to you. How fearful a meeting that of a weak, guilty, filthy sinner with an accursed death, whose work is utter destruction, and through an experience of which the Christless pass “into everlasting punishment.” Right before you is such a death if you are without true faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Not more surely did the roaring lion meet Samson than what is unspeakably

more awful shall be met by you, if you still continue to move as you have been moving in the past, for, “he that believeth not shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him.”

Application 2. Look through Samson's conflict with the lion to Christ's conflict with death. Like Samson, He is all alone. It was well for Samson's friends that he was all alone when the “young lion roared against him,” for it was his being alone which secured benefit to them. He went before them, and he went aside from them, and won the victory all alone; and therefore he went before them and with them, and carried to them the fruits of his triumph. Thus acts Christ in relation to His friends. All alone as their Substitute, He met and “destroyed him that had the power of death,” that “out of the slain eater might come meat” to them, and out of the conquered “strong” might come “sweetness” to them. He has left only a slain lion to look at when in faith you forecast the death that awaits you in Him; and because of His having triumphed over “the strong man,” there are both “meat” and “sweetness” to be found, as well as rest before you. But you will attain to this only as He is with you, and as He, by His Spirit, applies to you the word of His grace. His parents needed the presence of a living Samson, as well as the triumph of a Samson who had risked his life. You need the power of a living Christ to apply to you what the slain Christ secured for you. O is He not “all in all”?

Application 3. Do not expect to know the mystery of the Cross without the teaching of the Spirit of Christ. None could solve his riddle but Samson himself. None can open your understanding to understand the doctrine of the Cross but the Holy One, who has the unction which enables one to “know all things.” Let your cry be to Him for the opening of your eyes. Beware of a Delilah's deceit, but learn a lesson of importunity from her, as she persistently urged Samson to disclose to her his secret. Christ has no reason for hiding the truth from any who desire to know it; and surely He has encouraged you to ask the saving knowledge of the truth when He says, “Turn ye at My reproof; I will pour out My Spirit on you, I will make known My words unto you.”—John Kennedy, preached about 1880. He was one of the spiritual giants of the Highlands of Scotland, in whose pulpit C. H. Spurgeon preached.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### **THE UNBELIEF OF THOMAS.**

It is remarkable that one of the disciples should have been absent from the assembly on such an interesting occasion as the appearing of Christ in its midst after His resurrection (John 20). What was the cause of his absence would be worse than useless to conjecture. But the intention of Providence in it is obvious. It was to display the natural unbelief, as to the things of God, that is in the heart of man; as to teach us the kind of evidence that God accounts sufficient for His saving truth. Why was one of the disciples absent? Why was this disciple, Thomas? The narrative itself affords an answer to both questions. God's Providence intended to give us a specimen unbelief even in His own people. Thomas was peculiarly incredulous, therefore he was the person fitted to act the part designed for him on this occasion. If *Thomas* was afterwards convinced, there is no room left for captiousness to allege that the fact of Christ's resurrection was received by the disciples on slight grounds, without sufficient evidence and caution.

The unbelief of Thomas was unreasonable and sinful in a degree beyond expression. Why did he not believe the united testimony of the other Apostles? He should have received the testimony of any one of them. Unbelief justly exposed him to eternal condemnation. Has Thomas a license for unbelief, more than any other of the human race? Must he not be liable to condemnation on the same ground with the rest of mankind? Must he be satisfied in his own whims with respect to the evidence of this fact? Can he say with innocence, "Except I shall see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe"? Did ever any infidel express a more unreasonable demand for the evidence of Christ's resurrection, and the truth of the Christian religion? The

demands of skeptics are moderate and sober, compared to this intemperance of unbelief. The most unreasonable of them demand only that a particular revelation of the Gospel should be made to every man. This falls far short of the extravagance and unreasonableness of the unbelief of Thomas.

But there is wisdom in this madness. If Thomas is unreasonable, God uses his unreasonableness to effect a great purpose. By this means, in the satisfaction given to Thomas, we have the fact of the resurrection established on evidence beyond all suspicion. The possibility of delusion is removed; and the reality that it *was* Jesus whom the Apostles saw, rests not merely on the testimony of their eyes, but of the hands of the most unreasonable unbeliever that ever was in the world. Of all the infidels that ever existed, Thomas was the most extravagant. Voltaire and Hume are men of moderation, compared to this prince of infidels. Nothing will satisfy this philosopher but the handling of the prints of the nails in his Master. Was it not possible that the risen body of Jesus should have had *no scars*? Was not *this* the most likely thing to be expected? That Almighty power which could raise Him, could raise Him without a mark of His crucifixion. But Thomas was in all respects unreasonable; that through this, Jesus might exhibit Himself with evidence of His resurrection, that the most extravagant incredulity could presume to demand.

By this providential fact the Lord teaches us that His own disciples believe in Him, *not* because they are naturally more teachable, or less incredulous than others. It is God only who overcomes their unbelief. They are not only by nature the children of wrath, even as others; but after they are brought to faith and life, the only security of their perseverance is the favour and love of God in Christ. They are kept by faith, and that faith is not of themselves, but is the gift of God. The strongest of all the disciples of Christ would not abide in the faith for a single day, if, like Peter, or like Thomas, they were to be given up to their own natural unbelief. But if the strongest would not stand in their strength, the feeblest will not be plucked from the hand of the heavenly Father. After the fearful example of Peter and of Thomas, let no disciple of Christ trust in his own steadfastness. We are strong only when, seeing our own weakness, we have our strength in the Rock of our salvation. The world in general, and philosophers in particular, look upon Christians as a weak-minded people, who are prone to believe without sufficient evidence. The man of science, even when he can find no fault with the man of God, still thinks himself justifiable in considering him as utterly below himself in mental powers. He thinks there must be a soft place in his head somewhere. The best thing that he can find to say is that he is “an amiable enthusiast.” The truth, however, is far otherwise. Whether the believer is a man of strength of intellect, or feeble in mind, he would be equally an unbeliever with the most talented of his enemies, were he left to himself. Yea, the weakest would likely be the most presumptuous, and rash, and blasphemous, in the extravagance of their complaints against the Gospel. Thomas would not be behind Paine in the rashness of his demands and assertions. The Christian is made a little child by the Word and Spirit of God; but by nature he receives not the things of the Spirit, for they are to him, as well as to others, foolishness, until his eyes are opened to discover them.

It is a matter of fact, worthy of particular attention, that the simplest of the men of God make a more correct and a more scientific estimate of the philosopher, than the philosopher can make of him. The philosopher, with all his knowledge, knows not *God* by his philosophy. He knows not, then, the correct and enlightened views of the man of God on the highest of all sciences. The philosopher, not appreciating the value of the soul, nor the amount of the unspeakable glory of the heavenly inheritance, as well as of the

danger of overlooking condemnation, sees not the wisdom of the conduct of the man of God. He has no way to judge of him but by himself; and, therefore, as he himself is wise, the other must be a fool. The pleasure of knowledge, and the glory of fame are, with the philosopher, the very essence of the happiness of the third Heaven. In all this, the man of God, even the weakest of them, can enter into the feelings and sentiments of the men of science; for, by nature, he is such a one himself. And he still finds, in his very best moments, that should he lose sight of Heaven, and be left of God, he would make his paradise with the philosophers, or at least, according to his taste with some group of those who are, in different ways, in pursuit of earthly joys.

The Christian is not amazed that men seek the praise of men more than that of God; and that they pursue the things of this world rather than the things of God. He is rather amazed that God has turned *himself* out of this course, and enables him to resist the temptations which he daily meets in the world. To him there is no mystery in the character and choice of the philosopher, of the sensualist, of the men of the world. In them he sees himself as he is by nature. It is with new eyes that he sees spiritual things in a correct manner. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). The Christian is the true philosopher. He not only has knowledge of the most sublime of all the sciences, of which the wise men of this world are as destitute as the wild ass of the wilderness, but he has that discernment of human views and character which human wisdom never has attained. The Christian knows the philosopher better than the philosopher knows himself. Of all the sciences, the science of mind is the most sublime; Christians have a knowledge of the mind of man which no mere philosopher can obtain by his art. The philosopher gives an account of himself and of others, and of his own notions and views, which every Christian can detect as delusive and unreal.

In this providential fact, we see the forbearance and condescension of Christ to His people, even when they are unreasonable. He graciously removes the doubts of Thomas, though He might justly have left him to perish in his presumptuous unbelief. From this we may be assured, that, in one way or other, the Lord will remove the doubts of His people with respect to the evidence of the Gospel. If He will not give them that evidence which extravagance may rashly demand, He will keep them from such extravagance, or remove their doubts by opening their eyes to understand the proper evidence. This will be the same thing with presenting to their view and to their touch His hands and His side. He will assuredly overcome the unbelief and hardness of heart of the most obstinate of His chosen ones. If He were not provoked to give up on Thomas, His patience cannot meet with a more extravagant case of incredulity. He could call a Saul of Tarsus in the midst of his furious enmity to Him, and He did overcome the unbelief of the incredulous and obstinate Thomas. What a consolation is this to the believer! What thoughts of unbelief arise in the heart!

And how Satan could perplex the mind of the highest saint on earth— none but the believer can have any conception. If we were for a few minutes, from a state of the most assured faith, to be given into the hands of Satan to sift us as wheat, how would our faith fail us! Who knows what effect the fiery darts of the wicked one would have upon our minds, if they were not quenched? And quenched they cannot be but on the shield of faith; and in the case supposed God permits that faith to fail. What, then, will support us?

How shall we without dismay look into an eternal world? But though God may for a moment suffer us to be tried by the tempter, He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation make a way to escape, that we may be able to bear it. Our constant prayer to God ought to be that He would not give us into the hands of Satan, or that He will continue to give us the shield of faith. In matters of so great moment, the mind, particularly at death, naturally looks for and wishes every evidence of the truth, and sometimes demands unreasonable evidence. Nothing but the blood of Christ should be before our eyes: and we should always remember that we glorify God, not by doubting, but by believing His Word.

Were not the Lord Jesus present with His people in the time of their trial, and especially at the time of their death, nothing could deliver them from horror. That they are not only saved from fear, but enabled to rejoice and triumph in death, is the surest evidence that the Gospel is true. It is not surprising that persons ignorant of the character of God, or their own character, and of the consequences of sin, should be stupidly unconcerned at death. But the Christian knows too much to be kept from the very agonies of Hell, if he has not the life of Heaven when he passes through the valley and shadow of death. In the removal of the doubts of reason, let us gain confidence that the Lord will not forsake us in the time of our need. To a Christian, who is deeply acquainted with his own weakness, Hell itself is not a greater object of horror than to be given up without assistance from God—to wrestle and combat with the prince of this world at the hour of death.

It is remarkable that the Lord, though He complied with the unreasonable demand for evidence in the case of Thomas, yet He would not listen to the request of the rich man in Hell, for the conviction of his relatives on earth: “Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house: for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.” Did Abraham yield to the proposal, and admire the plan? No. “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets, let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead” (Luke 16). Our skeptics are still calling for more or better evidence. If the Gospel is true, they allege, it should have evidence against which no man could find objection. Let them alone. Press on them the evidence that God has given of the truth of His Gospel. If they believe not this, it will be found in the day of judgment that they have not rejected it from its insufficiency, but from their own enmity to the truth. Testimony is a sufficient ground of evidence; and if they reject the testimony of God by His Apostles, they will justly perish.

And the same thing will hold true with respect to the denial of the testimony of God with regard to any particular doctrine, and any particular part. The enemies of the doctrine, or fact recorded, will allege a want of proof; and, on the authority of philosophical doctrines, will take on them to modify the testimony of God. They make the dogmas of human science an authority paramount to the testimony of God in the Scriptures. This is the boldness, the blasphemy of infidelity. If God has given His testimony on any part, it is evidence paramount in authority to every other. To prove the truth alleged on such authority, nothing is necessary but to show that it is the result of the fair exposition of the laws of language. Let God be true, and let all men be liars. Against the testimony of God the philosopher is not to be heard more than a convicted perjurer. Our Lord, even though, for His own wise purposes, indulged Thomas, yet did not

approve of his unbelief, nor of his demand. He did not ascribe his incredulity to greater talents, or greater caution, or greater concern about the truth, than were discovered by his brethren. On the contrary, He shows that they rather are blessed who will believe *without* such evidence as Thomas demanded. There are two extremes, equally to be avoided, into which men are prone to fall. Some believe without evidence, believe against all evidence, believe what all evidence, capable of being submitted to the mind of man, shows to be absurd and impossible. On the other hand, there are some who unreasonably refuse evidence that is sufficient, evidence which God has pronounced sufficient, and look on themselves as manifesting greater intellect or wisdom, in demanding evidence of another kind, which God has not appointed. “Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed”—Alexander Carson.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **2 CORINTHIANS 3.**

We have long desired to offer a detailed exposition of this section of the Scriptures, but though the time for this be not fully ripe, we feel that some comments upon its contents are called for in connection with the closing articles of our series on the Divine Covenants. This is one of the principal chapters dealing with the new testament or Messianic Covenant, and therefore our treatment thereof would lack completeness were we to entirely ignore it. The main reason why we have for years past wished to open up this passage was because the “Dispensationalists” have so grievously wrested it. But their perversion of it is not to be wondered at, for there is not another portion in all God's Word which more clearly and expressly refutes their pet theory that this present age is to be followed by another which will witness the restoration and glorification of Judaism.

The outstanding error of the Dispensationalists is that the Gentiles in general and Christians in particular are not in any sense under the Ten Commandments, that the Divine Decalogue is not binding upon them as their rule of life, that the moral Law was abolished at the Cross. In order to bolster up their error they have appealed to the terms of 2 Corinthians 3, insisting that such clauses as, “that which is done away” (v. 11), and “that which is abolished” (v. 13), have reference to that which was written by the finger of the Lord God upon the two tables of stone. Before turning to the positive purport of our chapter, let us point out that such expressions as those just quoted cannot possibly be understood absolutely (without qualification) of the moral Law, as is clear from the following considerations.

First, because if the moral Law has been abolished, nothing remains to convict us of our guilt: “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20). Second, because if the moral Law be abolished the conduct of the Christless would be unproveable: “where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). Third, because if it be abolished it were needless to inquire, “Do we then make void the Law through faith?” (Rom. 3:31)—the inspired answer to which is “God forbid.” Fourth, because Christians could not then “delight in the Law of God” nor “serve” it (Rom. 7:22, 25). Fifth, because if the Law were abolished at Calvary, Paul could never have affirmed in his day there were those, “that are under the Law” (1 Cor. 9:20). Sixth, nor would he have quoted the Law and pressed it on Christians (Gal. 5:13-15). Seventh, nor assured obedient children that its promise of long life on earth held good for them (Eph. 6:1-3).

In order to understand 2 Corinthians 3, it is necessary to have before us something of the circumstances which occasioned the writing of the Corinthian Epistles, for a grasp of these is essential to an insight of many of their details. Soon after Paul's departure from Corinth (Acts 18) false teachers assailed the Corinthian saints, seeking to undermine the Apostle's influence and discredit his ministry. The result was that the believers there became divided into opposing factions, engaged in disputes, and seduced into carnal walking (1 Cor. 1:11, 12)—those who said, “I am of Paul and I am of Apollos,” were probably the *Gentile* converts, whereas they who boasted, “I am of Cephas and I am of Christ,” (claiming a fleshly relation to Him which they denied to the Gentiles converts) were most likely converted Jews. These false teachers had come to Corinth with “letters of commendation” (2 Cor. 3:1), probably from the temple at Jerusalem. They were “Hebrews” (2 Cor. 11:22), professing to be “ministers of Christ” (2 Cor. 11:23), and yet they were “false apostles” (11:13). They had denied that Paul was a true Apostle of Christ, arguing (seemingly on the basis of Acts 1:21, 22) that he could not be such, seeing he had not accompanied with Christ during the days of His flesh. This had obliged Paul to write the Corinthians, vindicating the Divine authority of His Apostleship (1 Cor. 9:1-3).

His first Epistle to the Corinthians had produced a salutary effect upon them as is clear from 2 Corinthians 1 and 2, yet it did not silence the “false Apostles” (the Judaising teachers), nor completely establish the believers there; hence the need for his second Epistle to them. His enemies were still working there against him, even charging him with not being a man of his word (see 1 Cor. 16:5 and compare 2 Cor. 1:15-24)! 2 Corinthians 5:12 shows plainly that Paul was furnishing his friends with materials for closing the mouths of those who maligned him—cf. also 2 Corinthians 10:2, 7. In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, Paul, with great reluctance, fully vindicated himself and his ministry by comparing and contrasting his gifts, labours, sufferings, and conduct with the pretenses of the false teachers, and shows himself to be not one whit behind any of the Apostles.

How serious the whole situation was is clear from 2 Corinthians 13:3: the saints there had been made to doubt whether Paul was an Apostle of *Christ's* at all! In consequence of such leaven working among them, the Corinthians had become carnal in their walk, for corrupt doctrine always produces corrupt practice. That the “false apostles” were Judaisers (i.e., seeking to convert the Corinthians to Judaism—the whole Mosaic system) is apparent from many incidental details. We trust that these few remarks, though of a somewhat technical nature, will supply that key which will enable the closer student to enter more intelligently into the contents of the two Corinthian Epistles.

Bearing in mind what has been pointed out above, let us turn now to 2 Corinthians 3. The first three verses contain a part of the Apostle's vindication. "Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some, epistles of commendation to you, or of commendation from you?" (v. 1). The word "again" intimates that a charge of glorifying himself had been made against Paul by his critics, so, in view of what he had just said in the context, he pauses to refute such a false accusation. Though the closing verses of chapter 2 contained a strong affirmation of his integrity, Paul wished it to be known that they had not been written with any intention of self-commendation: there was no need for him to "blow his own horn," or to solicit the praise of dying men.

"Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (v. 2). So far was Paul from standing in need of any formal credentials in order to now secure the confidence of the Corinthian believers—their own conversion under his ministry fully authenticated his authority, mission, and fidelity. Why, the Church at Corinth was itself his "letter of commendation," written not by man, but by the Spirit of God, thereby demonstrating that he was commissioned from Heaven. They were inscribed upon his deepest affections: a fact of which he was conscious and certain—anything of which a man is sure, may be said to be "written" upon his heart (Rom. 2:15; Heb. 8:10).

"Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart" (v. 3). Not only were they inscribed upon his affections, but the miracle of grace wrought in them was obvious to others: "manifestly declared to be," signifies publicly known as such. Their conversion had been so radical and conspicuous that thanks had been rendered to God for the same by His people far and wide, for their case was not one of a superficial and external reformation, but of a supernatural and internal regeneration. Thus, the saving efficacy of his preaching in that notorious centre of wickedness was the most convincing of all testimonials that he was a servant of Christ and faithful minister of His Gospel. The conversion of the Corinthians was the work of Christ, effected by the instrumentality of Paul. How vastly superior was *this* to any human "letter of commendation": any man could write with ink on an external tablet, but only Christ can write with the Spirit on the heart—through His servants.

"And such trust have we through Christ to Godward" (v. 4). The opening "And" at once intimates to what this "trust" referred: the fact that the Holy Spirit had so signally owned and blessed his labours at Corinth assured Paul's heart through Christ that he was engaged in His cause and the kingdom of God, and therefore has he expressed himself so freely in 2:12-17. He was fully assured of the Divine authority and glory of his mission. It was a confidence so strong that it did not falter in the conscious presence of God. This confidence he had "through Christ": it was not a carnal self-confidence of personal excellency, but a conviction of the veracity of the Gospel and of the reality of that vocation he had personally received from the ascended Redeemer.

"Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God" (v. 5). Admire here the blessed balance: strong confidence was coupled with deep humility! Paul would have them know that neither he nor his fellow-ministers possessed any sufficiency in themselves for so momentous a commission, either in natural endowment or because of their zeal and fidelity. He freely and frankly renders honour to Him: the Apostles were deeply conscious that all their success was entirely of

God: He was the One who had called, qualified, and used them. How strongly this sense of insufficiency is expressed: not merely unable of themselves to *do* anything, but even to “think”—their knowledge, planning, and efficiency was neither self-acquired, nor self-sustained.

“Who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament” (v. 6). This was affirmed in confirmation of what he had previously stated, for the Greek word here rendered “able” is the same as translated “sufficient” in the verse preceding. It was God through Christ who had qualified the Apostles for their work. In referring to them as “ministers of the new testament,” he distinguishes the servants of Christ in this dispensation from those under the old economy. Herein he struck the keynote of all that follows—wherein the Christian is contrasted from the Mosaic dispensation. This “new testament” or “covenant”—as opposed to the covenant which God entered into with the nation of Israel at Sinai—is that “better testament” of which Jesus was made “Surety” (Heb. 7:22), the “better covenant” of which He is the Mediator (Heb. 8:6).

“Not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). The transition from Paul's vindication of his Apostleship to his exposition of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism was both easy and natural: the terms which he had used in verse 3 at once brought to his mind the outstanding characteristics of the two covenants or economies, where he had set the internal work of the Spirit over against “tables of stone.” The terms of that old covenant which was inaugurated at Sinai were engraved upon the two tablets which Moses received from God, whereas His promise through Jeremiah (31:31-34), was that the requirements of the new covenant should be written upon the *hearts* of its beneficiaries. This it is which supplies the key to all that follows. It is not (as some have erroneously supposed) that the Apostle here pits Grace against Law, but rather that he contrasts the two covenants: the moral Law in the one case being engraved externally, and in the other being made effectual internally.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). In the second half of this verse the Apostle begins a series of contrasts between the two covenants. We will not take anything for granted, but pause to give proof as we proceed. That the terms “letter” and “spirit” signify Judaism and Christianity is clear, first from the fact that *these* are what he continues to compare in the verses that follow; and second, because they are the terms he uses elsewhere in the same sense. Thus in Romans 7:6 he speaks of “newness of spirit” and “the oldness of the letter” when contrasting the two economies; so too in Romans 2:27 he characterises the Jew as being of “the letter.” Should it be inquired what is the ground of these designations, *why* is Judaism called “letter,” and Christianity “spirit,” two answers may be given.

First, Judaism may be called the “letter” for the same reason that God's Word is called the “Scripture” (both words come from the same root), namely, because it was something *written*. Not only were the Ten Commandments—the *foundation* of the Mosaic economy—written on stones, but the whole Mosaic economy—moral, ceremonial and civil—was a volume known as “the writings.” Second, the Law as written was something *external* and objective. It was addressed to the eye and ear. It was not an inward principle or power. Judaism presented to the Jews the Divine rule of duty to which they must be conformed, but it conveyed neither disposition nor ability to obey. In antithesis thereto Christianity has to do with the heart and is spiritual rather than ritualistic. The Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation”

(Rom. 1:16), for by it the Spirit works in regenerating the soul. Thus, 2 Corinthians 3:6 expresses briefly the characteristic differences between Judaism and Christianity. “The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the Law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was letter, the other spirit” (Charles Hodge).

“For if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance—which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (vv. 7, 8). Paul proceeds to set forth the immeasurable superiority of the new covenant over the old. In order to ascertain the precise trend of the Apostle in this passage it is most important to note his repeated reference to Moses, for it is thereby apparent that he is not opposing the Gospel to the moral Law as such (which long antedated Moses!), but to the whole Mosaic system, namely, *Judaism*. His later words, “when Moses is *read* the veil is upon their hearts” (v. 15), cannot possibly be restricted to the Ten Commandments, but obviously refers, mainly, to the ceremonial law, wherein there was so much which typified and pointed forward to Christ and His work of redemption.

The moral Law, whether as revealed in the Scriptures, or as the basis of the Mosaic Covenant, was designed to bring men to the knowledge of their sinfulness and helplessness, to produce a sense of guilt and wretchedness, and a longing for salvation. Yet though the ministration of the Ten Commandments was one of condemnation and death to every transgressor who lay under its curse, nevertheless, as setting forth the holiness, truth, and righteousness of God, it was “glorious.” It bore the stamp of Divinity upon it, and this was emblematically manifested in the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. The brightness of his face (Exo. 34:29) was in two respects a symbol of the glory of the old covenant. First, it was only an *external* one: what was even the bright cloud overshadowing the cherubim to the light of God's presence filling the soul! Second, it was *transient*, soon “done away”; whereas the ministry of the new covenant issues in eternal glory.

“How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (2 Cor. 3:8). Not only was Judaism “glorious” because the moral Law (its foundation) expressed the moral perfections of God, but also because the ceremonial law contained much that adumbrated the Person and work of Christ; and, too, because the whole Mosaic economy was introductory and preparatory to Christianity. Nevertheless, the Messianic Covenant contains a far higher and grander “glory.” The A.V. rightly used a small “s” for “spirit” here in verse 8, for the reference is not to the third Person of the Godhead but to the new testament or covenant, which in verse 6 he had denominated “spirit” in contrast from “the letter” or old covenant. Observe, it is *not*, “the operations of the Spirit,” but “the ministration of the spirit,” which can only refer to the evangelical service of the Apostles and those who have succeeded them—the “teaching-function of the Gospel” as one has defined it. The Gospel is not something external and powerless, but is inward and saving, and so is designated “spirit.”

“For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory” (v. 9). “This verse is a confirmation of the preceding. The Gospel is more glorious than the Law, for the ministration of righteousness is more glorious than the ministration of condemnation. The 'ministration of condemnation' is that ministration which brings men into a state of conscious

condemnation, that is, which makes them know and feel that they are condemned. The 'ministration of righteousness' is that ministration which reveals a righteousness by which men are justified, and thus freed from the condemnation pronounced upon them by the Law. As much better therefore as justification is than condemnation to eternal death, so much better is the Gospel than the Law" (Charles Hodge).

"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" (v. 10). "If that ministry, which in itself tended only to condemnation, contained such a display of the Divine glory as rendered the exercise of it honourable; how should not that ministry, by which sinners are taught the way of righteousness by faith in Christ, and which contained so full and complete a discovery of the glory and harmony of God's perfections, confer far greater honour on the Apostles, who were employed to preach it to the world? Indeed, the glory of the Law, and that of the Legal Dispensation, were so eclipsed by the excellent glory of the Gospel, as *in this respect* to be comparatively nothing; and after the publication of Christianity, the Mosaic dispensation had lost all its *reflected* glory and Divine authority and was become a lifeless letter and form to those who rejected Christ" (Thomas Scott).

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (v. 11). In seeking to discover exactly what has been "done away" the whole context must be taken into consideration. The Apostle was rebutting those who rejected the Gospel of God's grace and opposed Judaism to Christ. Now the central thing in Judaism, that about which the entire system revolved, was the *ceremonial law*. Most blessedly and strikingly did that shadow forth the Gospel, presaging Christ and His redemption; yet, if emptied of its typical meaning and message, it was but a lifeless form, a shell without any kernel, for the only saving value the ceremonial law possessed was to teach Israel to look beyond the shadows to the Substance. Consequently, after the Anti-type had appeared and Christianity was established, it was discarded, "done away" by God, and was only a killing letter unto those who rejected Christ, determining to cling to it.

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious." In this verse the Apostle continues to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old, the glory of Christianity surpassing that of Judaism. First, he had pointed out that the one was "the ministration of death" (cf. Heb. 12:18-21), whereas the other was "the ministration of the spirit," saving (2 Cor. 3:7, 8). Second, the former was "the ministration of condemnation," but the latter of "righteousness" (v. 9). Here (v. 11) he contrasts their stability or continuance: the one was "done away," the other "remaineth" to the end of time. The introduction of Christianity necessarily implied the abolition of Judaism: "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away" (Heb. 8:13).

"Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished" (2 Cor. 3:12, 13). We have linked together these two verses because the latter can only be properly understood in the light of the former, as the opening "And" of verse 12 indicates. In them yet another contrast is drawn, showing how the new covenant excels the old. The "such hope" of verse 12 is the reiteration of the Apostle's "trust" or confidence in verse 4, here extending to the future as well as the present: he was fully assured that the Gospel and its ministry would prove themselves to be far more

excellent than the ministry of Moses. “Plainness of speech” refers not so much to frankness of language, as to the absence of “dark sayings.”

“And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face.” This has reference to the *mode of manifestation* in connection with the revelation God made under the old covenant. In comparison with the clear and full manifestation of Divine grace in the Gospel, the redemptive mercy of God was obscured under Judaism by types and shadows, mysterious rites and elaborate symbols. The grand truth concerning the Person and work of Christ “In other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed” (Eph. 3:5). The truth was then hidden beneath the Levitical figures. Judaism had a Divine glory as was evident by the radiance of the mediator's face; but it was obscure, as was denoted by the veil he placed on his countenance, so that Israel could not, “steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.”

The veil with which Moses covered his face was not only an apt emblem of the obscurity of that system of which he was the mediator, but it also served to prevent Israel seeing the end or fading away of the brightness of his countenance, for the glory of his face—in keeping with the transitory character of the Mosaic—was but a fleeting one. In 2 Corinthians 3:7, the “done away” had reference to the glory of the face of Moses, and in verse 11, to this ministry and the economy to which it belonged. Here in verse 13 the reference is again to the former, and “the end” signifies the termination. “Viewing this brightness as a symbol of the Divine mission of Moses, the Apostle ascribes to him a still further intention in the veiling of it (additional to the calming of their fears: Exo. 34:36), namely that the children of Israel might not, by the perception of its transience, be led to think of the transitory nature of the service or ministration of Moses itself” (P. Fairbairn). For Israel to have fixed their eyes on the future glory of Christianity would have tended to weaken their regard for the preparatory system under which they were placed.

“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ” (v. 14). Blinded by pride and prejudice, they looked no further than the outward symbols, and mistaking the shadows for the substance, rejected Christ when He appeared, thereby preventing themselves from perceiving the real intent, meaning, and glory, of the Levitical law. “The veil untaken away in reading of the Old Testament” signifies they were so satisfied with the external, they could not penetrate to what lay beneath. The Jews utterly failed to understand the ministry of Moses, and though the Apostles used such plainness of speech, their hearts were calloused. The words, “which veil is done away in Christ,” fixes for us the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament types, promises and prophecies. For lack of faith in Christ, the Jews to this day are blind to the real purport of Judaism, and grasping tightly the types, despise the Antitype. The Old Testament is intelligible only when Christ is used as the key thereto.

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart” (v. 15). This is explanatory of the preceding verse: the reason why the unbelieving Jews failed to see that the Sinaiatic Covenant had been “done away” in Christ, was because of the state of their hearts—had they not been blinded by prejudice and pride, when the Redeemer appeared and His glorious Gospel was proclaimed by His servants, they would have seen that the Substance now replaced the shadows. The revelation of Christ even in the Old Testament, though obscure when compared with the plain Epistles of the New Testament, was sufficiently plain to be understood by the Jew had he only been in a right state of mind; hence our Lord's upbraiding of

His disciples in Luke 24:25.

“Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor. 3:16). Salvation for the Jew comes in precisely the same way as it does to the Gentile, namely, by faith in and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. When the heart of that people, whether individually or collectively, is truly converted, then shall be given a true insight into the meaning of Judaism and the spiritual import of its ceremonies and sacrifices. “Now the Lord is that spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (v. 17). The word “spirit” should be with a small “s” as in verse 8, for the reference is obviously to “the spirit” of verse 6, the “spirit” that stands opposed to “the letter,” namely, the animating principle, the truth and power under the forms and types of Judaism. “Christ is the life of the Law” (Calvin)—savingly so when the heart truly turns to Him. Apart from faith in and grace from Christ, all knowledge, ordinances, and external obedience is but a dead form of godliness.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (v. 18). The opening “But” introduces that company of believers opposed to the blinded Jews who knew not the Lord. The “we all (Christians) with unveiled face beholding” is first in designed contrast from those who have a veil upon their hearts (v. 15). Second, it looks back to the eminent case of Moses, who, unlike the people, was admitted into the immediate presence of the Lord (being unveiled before Him, though veiled before them), whence he received impressions of glory upon his countenance. So Christians, though in a far higher sense, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, and not only so, are transformed after His image. How this, again, demonstrates the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

Now to sum up 2 Corinthians 3. Paul is vindicating the Divine authority and excellency of his Apostleship, in the course of which he magnifies his office by showing how much grander was the mission entrusted to him than had been the ministry of Moses. In developing his demonstration, the Apostle places Christianity in sharp antithesis from Judaism, the latter especially as it revolved around the ceremonial law. The contrast is between the two “testaments” or “covenants,” the Mosaic and the Messianic economies (compare Heb. 12:18-24), which he opposes as “letter” and “spirit” (v. 6), and in what follows to the end of the chapter a series of contrasts are drawn showing wherein the latter excelled the former.

The Judaisers were insisting that the ministration of the Mosaic economy still obtained (the temple yet stood at Jerusalem), and therefore they, consistently, taught that when Gentiles believed in Christ they must be circumcised and brought into subjection to the whole ceremonial law if they were to become recipients of the peculiar blessings promised the Jews. The Apostle here demolished their very foundation by affirming that the old covenant was “abolished.” His argument from verse 8 onwards shows that if Christ be taken out of the old covenant—that is, if the ceremonial law were regarded as law and not as a type of Him—then it was but a dead body—lifeless and powerless. Considered abstractedly (a thing apart as it were in itself), the old covenant was but a ministration of condemnation and death. The Apostle was not dealing with the Law as a standard of conduct for believers, but as that which sounded the doom of unbelievers.

That which the Apostle here dwelt upon particularly was the fact that the Mosaic dispensation was a *veiled*

or obscure one. Not only was the Siniatic Covenant a covering cast upon the Covenant of Promise made with Abraham (Gal. 3:16-19), but it largely concealed the glories of Christ. Hence it was that Moses veiled his face, denoting that the blessings of redemption were hidden beneath elaborate symbols, and also adumbrating the fact that the hearts of unbelieving Israel were calloused when they read his writings. It is to be duly noted that throughout this chapter Paul studiously avoided using the words “grace” and “law” (for it is *not* a contrast between *them*), but he *does* employ the terms “new testament” (v. 6) and “old testament” (v. 14)! That which is “done away” is not the Ten Commandments as the Rule of life for all God's people, but the Mosaic economy; and since Judaism is “*abolished*” it will never be resuscitated in some future “millennium.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

November, 1938

### **A VERY PRESENT HELP.**

While it is ever our desire to prepare each article in accord with the title of this magazine, yet we would point out that we write not only for the informing and instructing of the mind, but also (and chiefly) for the affecting of the heart and the practical regulation of the walk. It therefore seems fitting that we should say a word, however brief, on the crisis through which the Lord has recently brought us as a nation and empire. In connection therewith three passages stand out in our thoughts.

First, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). This holds good for a nation as truly as for an individual, and for the latter as much as the former. Most manifestly was the blessed truth of this verse evidenced a few weeks ago. While regretting that there has been little or no national acknowledgment of our grievous sins as a people, and no official call to repentance and humiliation before God, yet there is much for which we ought to be profoundly thankful. First, that a national call to earnest prayer for God's intervention was made, and very widely responded to. Second, that the message of our gracious sovereign, King George, was a *Scriptural* one: "Be of good cheer." Third, that the wildly enthusiastic crowds who greeted the Prime Minister on returning to his official residence, sang, "O God our help in ages past," before they dispersed. Fourth, that a call was officially made for national thanksgiving to be rendered unto God for peace.

Second, "The Heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26). How comforting to faith is such a Divine declaration. How blessed to know that the living God is on the Throne, shaping the destiny of nations as truly as He orders

the life of each individual saint. How tranquilizing for the mind to be assured that neither despot nor dictator can move one step further than what the Lord permits. Nevertheless, it is our duty and privilege to supplicate God when the peace of the world is seriously imperiled, that it may please Him to hold back the hounds of war and in His righteous wrath, “remember mercy.” That the “Heavens do rule” was our unfailing confidence and consolation throughout the trying days from which we have recently emerged, and the substance of this paragraph was what we sent to numbers of our readers during the crisis itself. Once more the editor would bear his humble testimony that the grand truth of God's absolute supremacy and sovereignty supplies a sure resting-place for the heart in every trial.

Third, “Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore” (Psa. 105:4). This is the verse which comes before us and which we desire shall impress our hearts now that the great emergency is behind us. It is natural for us, both as a people and individuals, to seek unto the Lord under the pressure of an unbearable strain, for even the animals cry out for relief when in distress. But more than this is required from us: far more than this is due Him who is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises.” “Seek His face *evermore*” is our crying need, as an empire, and as individual believers. To “seek His face” in times of prosperity as well as adversity, when peace is assured as much as when it is threatened. To “seek His face” for wisdom, for the spirit of righteousness, for strength to do that which is pleasing in His sight. To “seek His face” for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit, for the strengthening and enlarging of His Cause on earth, for the glorifying of His great name. Let us pray with renewed earnestness for such blessings.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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December, 1938

### THE COVENANT ALLEGORY.

Those of our readers who are particularly interested in the Divine Covenants would be disappointed if we closed our lengthy series thereon and ignored the last eleven verses of Galatians 4, and therefore we felt it necessary to devote an article to their consideration. That this passage is far from being free of difficulties appears from the diverse expositions of the commentators, for scarcely any two of them agree even in substance. Nor will the limited space now at our disposal allow us to enter into as full an elucidation as could be wished, nor permit the pausing now and again to furnish collateral proofs for what is advanced, as is our usual custom. Brevity has its advantages, but it does not always make for clarity. We must, however, content ourselves now with a comparatively terse running comment on this passage, and that, according to the limited light which we have thereon.

Galatians 4:21-31 is, in several respects, very similar to the contents of 2 Corinthians 3. In each case the Apostle is opposing himself to the errors which had been sedulously propagated amongst his converts by Judaisers. In each case he shows that the fundamental issue between them concerned the Covenants, for any teacher who is confused thereon is certain to go astray in all his preaching. In each case the Apostle appeals to well-known incidents in the Old Testament Scriptures, and with the wisdom given him from above proceeds to bring out the deep spiritual meaning thereof. In each case he establishes conclusively the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism, and thus completely undermined the very foundations of his adversaries' position. Though of peculiar importance to those unto whom the Apostle wrote immediately, this passage contains not a little of great value for us today.

“Tell me, ye that desire to be under the Law, do ye not hear the Law?” (Gal. 4:21). Here the Apostle addresses himself to those who had been lending a ready ear to their spiritual enemies. By his, “ye that desire to be under the Law,” was signified those who hankered after subjection to Judaism. His, “do ye not hear the Law?” means, are you willing to listen unto what is recorded in the first book of the Pentateuch and have pointed out to you the dispensational significance of the same? Paul's design was to show those who were so anxious to be circumcised and submit themselves to the whole Mosaic system, that, so far from such a course being honourable and beneficial, it would be fraught with danger and disgrace. To yield unto those who sought to seduce them spiritually, would inevitably result in “bondage” (see 4:9) not “liberty” (5:1). To prevent this, he begs them to listen to what God had said.

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman. But he who was born of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise. Which things are an allegory” (vv. 22-24). Very remarkable indeed is this, for we are here Divinely informed that not merely did the Mosaic rites possess a typical significance, but the lives of the Patriarchs themselves had a figurative meaning. Not only so, but their affairs were so controlled by Providence that they were shaped to shadow forth coming events of vast magnitude. Paul was here moved by the Spirit to inform us that the domestic occurrences in Abraham's household were a parable in action, which parable he had interpreted for us. Thus we are granted an insight to passages in Genesis which no human wisdom could possibly have penetrated.

The transactions in the family of Abraham were Divinely ordered to presage important dispensational epochs. The domestic affairs of the Patriarch's household were invested with a prophetic significance. The historical incidents recorded in Genesis 16 and 21 possessed a typical meaning, containing beneath their surface, spiritual truths of profound importance. The Apostle here reminds his readers of the circumstances recorded of the two wives of Abraham, and of their respective offspring, and declares that the mothers adumbrated the two covenants, and their sons, the respective tendencies and results of those covenants. In other words, Sarah and Hagar are to be viewed as the representatives of the two covenants, and the sons which they bore as representatives of the kind of worshippers which those covenants were fitted to produce.

“For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a free woman.” The Apostle's design was to wean those Galatians who inclined to Judaism, from their strange infatuation for an obsolete and servile system, by unfolding to them its true nature. This he does by referring them to an emblematic representation of the two economies. Abraham had a number of other sons besides Ishmael and Isaac, but it is to them alone—the circumstances of their birth, subsequent conduct, history and fate—that Paul's discussion exclusively relates.

In her unbelief and impatience (unwilling to wait for God to make good His word in His own time and way) Sarah gave her maid to Abraham in order that he might not be wholly without posterity. Though this caused confusion and brought trouble upon all concerned, yet it was ordained by God to presage great dispensational distinctions, nor did it in any wise thwart the accomplishment of His eternal purpose. “Abraham had two sons”: Ishmael, the son of an Egyptian, a bondsman; Isaac the son of Sarah, a free

woman, of the same rank as her husband. As we have already said, these two mothers prefigured the two covenants, and their children the worshippers which those covenants produced.

“But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the free woman was by promise” (v. 23). Great as was the disparity between the two mothers, greater still was the difference between the way in which their respective sons were born. Ishmael was born in the ordinary course of generation, for, “after the flesh,” signifies to the carnal counsel which Sarah gave to Abraham, and by the mere strength of nature. In connection with the birth of Ishmael there was not any special promise given, nor any extraordinary Divine interposition. Vastly different was it in the case of Isaac, for he *was* the child of promise, and born in direct consequence of the miracle-working power of God, and was under the benefit of that promise as long as he lived. That which is here specially emphasized by the Apostle is that the son of the slave was in *an inferior condition* from the very beginning.

“Which things are an allegory” (v. 24). An “allegory” is a parabolic method of conveying instruction, spiritual truths being set forth under material figures. Allegories are in words what hieroglyphics are in printing, both of which abound among the Orientals—Bunyan's “Pilgrim's Progress” is the best sustained allegory in the English language. “For these (feminine) are the two covenants” (v. 24). Here the Apostle proceeds to give us the occult meaning of the historical facts alluded to in the preceding verse. He affirms that the domestic incidents in the family of Abraham constituted a Divinely-ordained illustration of the basic principles in regard to the condition of spiritual slaves and of spiritual freemen, and are to be regarded as adumbrating the *bondage* which subjection to the law of Moses produced and the *liberty* which submission to the Gospel secures.

“These are the two covenants.” This cannot, of course, be understood literally, for it was neither intelligible nor true that Sarah and Hagar were actually two covenants in their own persons. The words “is” and “are” frequently have the force of *represent*. When Christ affirmed of the sacramental bread, “This is My body,” He meant, this bread represents My body. When we read of the rock smitten by Moses in the wilderness (out of which gushed the stream of living water), “that rock was Christ” (1 Cor. 10:4), it obviously signifies, that rock *prefigured* Christ. So, too, when we are told, “the seven stars *are* the angels of the seven churches and the seven candle sticks which thou sawest are the seven churches” (Rev. 1:20), we are to understand that the one symbolized the other.

“These are the two covenants” (Gal. 4:24). There has been much difference of opinion as to exactly *which* covenants are intended. Some insist that the reference is to the Everlasting Covenant of Grace and the Adamic or Covenant of Works; others argue it is the Abrahamic or Covenant of Promise and the Siniatic, while others conclude it is the Siniatic and the Christian or that which is made with the people of God in the Gospel. Really, it is more a matter of terms than anything else, for whatever nomenclature we adopt, it comes to much the same thing. “The one from Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, which is Hagar” (v. 24): by which is meant, that order of things under which the nation of Israel was placed at Sinai, appointed for the purpose of keeping them a separate people, and which because of its legalistic nature was fitly foreshadowed by the bondslave.

“The one (covenant) from Mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage,” or produces those of a servile spirit,

for it made slaves of all who sought justification and salvation by their own doings. It is to be carefully borne in mind that the relation entered into between God and Israel at Sinai was entirely a *natural* one, being made with the Nation as such, and consequently all their descendants, upon their being circumcised, automatically became subjects of it without any spiritual change being wrought in them. “So far as this covenant gave birth to any children, those were not true children of God, free, spiritual, with hearts of filial confidence and devoted love; but miserable bondmen, selfish, carnal, full of mistrust and fear. Of these children of the Siniatic Covenant we are furnished with the most perfect exemplar in the Scribes and Pharisees of our Lord's time” (P. Fairbairn).

“For this Hagar is mount Sinai in Arabia” (v. 25). Here again the word “is” signifies “represents”: Hagar prophetically anticipated and prefigured Mount Sinai—not the literal mount, but that covenant which Jehovah there entered into with the nation of Israel. Nor is this mode of expression by any means unusual in the Scriptures: when representing Samaria and Jerusalem by two women, the Prophet said, “Samaria is Aholah and Jerusalem Aholibah” (Ezek. 23:4). “And answereth to Jerusalem which now is” (Gal 4:25). “Answereth to” signifies corresponds with, or as the margin gives it, “is in the same rank with”: the origin, status, and condition of Hagar supplied an exact analogy to the state of Jerusalem in the Apostle's time. Jerusalem, which was the metropolis of Palestine and the headquarters of its religion, stands for Judaism.

“And is in bondage with her children” (v. 25). Judaism was subject to an endless round of ceremonial institutions, which the Apostles themselves declared to be a yoke “which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear” (Acts 15:10). Those under it enjoyed none of that spiritual liberty which the Gospel bestows upon those who submit to its terms. That large part of the Nation which had no interest in the covenant of promise made with Abraham (whereof *faith* was an indispensable prerequisite for entering into the good of it), was indeed outwardly a part of Abraham's family and members of the visible Church (as Hagar was a member of his family), yet, (like Ishmael), they were born in servitude, and all their outward obedience was of a slavish character, and their privileges (as his) but carnal and temporal.

“But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal 4:26). Here Paul shows what was prefigured by Sarah. Three things are said in describing the covenant and constitution of which she was the appropriate emblem, each of which must be duly noted in the framing of our definition. First, “Jerusalem which is above.” This word “above” (ano) is generally employed of *location*, and would thus signify the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb. 11:22), in contrast from the earthly. But here it is placed in antithesis from, “which now is” (Gal. 4:25) and would thus mean the *prior* and primitive Jerusalem, of which Melchizedek was king (Heb. 7:1) and to whose order of priesthood Christ's pertains. Or the “above” may have the force of excellency or *supremacy*, as in “*high calling*” (Phil. 3:14). Combining the three: Sarah shadowed forth the entire election of grace, all true believers from the beginning to the end of time.

Second, which “is free”: such was the status and state of Sarah in contrast from that of Hagar, the bondslave. Suitably did Sarah set forth that spiritual liberty which is to be found in Christ, for He redeems all His people from the bondage of sin and death. Believing Gentiles are freed from the curse of the moral law, and believing Jews are freed from the dominion of the ceremonial law as well. Third, “which is the mother of us all.” The reference is not to the Church either visible or invisible, for she cannot be the parent of herself; rather is it the Everlasting Covenant of Grace which is in view, in which were included all true

believers. Thus the differences between the systems represented by Hagar and Sarah are: the one was earthly, carnal, slavish, temporary—the other, heavenly, spiritual, free, eternal.

“For it is written, Rejoice, thou barren that barest not; break forth and cry, thou that travailest not: for the desolate hath many more children than she which hath a husband” (Gal. 4:27). This was obviously brought in by Paul to confirm the interpretation he had made of the covenant allegory. It is a quotation from the predictions of Isaiah. Four things call for our consideration. First, the need for this comforting promise which God then gave. Second, the precise place in Isaiah's prophecy from which this quotation is taken. Third, the particular manner in which it is here introduced. Fourth, its striking pertinency to the Apostle's purpose.

The *need* for this reassuring word given by the Lord to His believing, yet sorrowing, people in the days of Isaiah is not difficult to perceive, if we bear in mind the exact terms of the promise originally given to the Patriarch and his wife, and then consider the state of Israel under Judaism. The grand promise to Abraham was that he should be, “a father of *many* nations” (Gen. 17:4), and that Sarah should be “a mother of nations” (Gen. 17:16). But at Sinai Sarah's natural children were placed under a covenant which erected a middle wall of partition, shutting them off from all other nations. How rigorous the restrictions of the covenant were and the exclusiveness it produced, appear plainly in the unwillingness of Peter (till supernaturally authorized by God) to enter the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:28).

The Siniatic Covenant consisted largely in “meats and drinks and carnal ordinances,” yet was it only imposed, “till the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). It was well adapted to Israel after the flesh, for it encouraged them to obedience by the promise of temporal prosperity and restrained them by fear of temporal judgments. Amid the great mass of the unregenerate Jews there was always a remnant according to the election of grace, whose heart God had touched (1 Sam. 10:26), in whose heart was His Law (Isa. 51:7). But the Nation as a whole had become thoroughly corrupt by the time of Isaiah, being deaf to the voice of Jehovah and fast ripening for judgment (Isa. 1:2-6). The godly portion had diminished to “a very small remnant” (1:9), and the outlook was fearfully dark. It was to strengthen the faith of the spiritual and comfort their hearts that Isaiah was raised up.

The quotation here made by Paul was from Isaiah 54:1, and its very *location* intimated clearly that it looked forward to Gospel times, for coming immediately after that graphic description of the Redeemer's sufferings in the previous chapter, it at once suggests that we are then given a picture of those new-covenant conditions which followed His death. This is ever God's way: in the darkest night He causes the stars of hope to shed forth their welcome light, bidding His people to look beyond the gloomy present to the brighter future. God had not forgotten His promise to the Patriarch, and though many centuries had intervened, the coming of His Son would make good the ancient oracles, for all the Divine promises are established in Christ: (2 Cor. 1:19, 20).

Let us next note the *manner* in which Paul introduces Isaiah's prediction into his discussion: “*For* it is written.” It is clear that the Apostle cites the Prophet to establish what he had affirmed regarding the allegorical significance of the circumstances of Abraham's household. This at once fixes for us the elucidation of the prophecy. Paul had pointed out that Abraham had sons by two diverse wives, that those

sons represented the different type of worshippers which the two covenants produced—that Sarah (as representing the Abraham Covenant), which he here likened unto “Jerusalem which is above,” is “the mother of us all.” In turn, Isaiah refers to two women, views them allegorically, calling the one “barren” and contrasting her from one “who had a husband,” assuring the former of a far more numerous progeny.

*How pertinent* Isaiah's prediction was to the Apostle's argument is evident. His design was to turn away the hearts of the Galatians from Judaism, and to accomplish this he demonstrates that that system had been superseded by something far more blessed and spiritually productive. “For it is written, Rejoice thou barren.” *Who* was the Prophet there addressing? Immediately, the godly remnant in Israel, the children of faith, those who had their standing in and derived their blessing from the Abrahamic Covenant. Isaiah addressed them in the terms of the allegory. Just as the historical Sarah was childless for many years after she became the wife of Abraham, so the mystical Sarah (Abrahamic Covenant) had for long centuries shown no sign whatever of coming to fruition. But as the literal Sarah ultimately became a mother, so the mystical one should bear a numerous seed.

Marvellous indeed are the ways of God, and remarkably is His decree wrought out through His providences. That parable in action in the household of Abraham contemplated that which took thousands of years to unfold. First, was the marriage between Abraham and Sarah, which symbolized the covenant union between God and His people. Second, for many years Sarah remained barren, foreshadowing that lengthy period during which God's purpose in that covenant was suspended. Third, Hagar, the bondslave, took Sarah's place in the family of Abraham, typifying his natural descendants being placed under the Siniatic Covenant. Fourth, Hagar did not permanently supplant Sarah, adumbrating the fact that Judaism was of but temporary duration. Fifth, ultimately Sarah came into her own and was Divinely enabled to bear a supernatural seed—emblem of the spiritual children of God under the new covenant.

“Rejoice, thou barren that bearest not.” The Abrahamic Covenant is here represented as a wife who (like Sarah) had long remained childless. Comparatively few real children had been raised up to God among the Jews from Moses onwards. True, the Nation was in outward covenant with Him, and thus was (like Hagar in the type) “she who hath a husband,” but all the fruit they bore was like unto Ishmael—that which was merely natural, the product of the flesh. But the death of Christ was to alter all this: though the Jews would reject Him, there should be a great accession to the spiritual family of Abraham from among the Gentiles, so that there would be a far greater number of saints under the new covenant than had pertained under the old.

“Now we, brethren, as Isaac was, are the children of promise” (Gal. 4:28). Here the Apostle begins his application of the allegory. As Sarah prefigured the Covenant of Grace, so Isaac represented the true children of God. Paul was here addressing himself to his *spiritual* “brethren,” and, therefore, the “we” includes all who are born from above—believing Gentiles as well as Jews. “We,” the children of the new covenant, represented in the allegory by Isaac. Our standing and state is essentially different from Ishmael's, for he (like the great mass of those under the Siniatic Covenant) belong to the ordinary course of mere nature; whereas genuine Christians are “the children of promise”—of that made to Abraham, which, in turn, made manifest what God had “promised before the world began” (Titus 1:2). The relation into which believers are brought with God originates in a miracle of grace which was the subject of Divine

promise.

“But as then he that was born after the flesh persecuted him that was born after the Spirit, even so it is now” (Gal 4:29). Here the Apostle brings in a further detail supplied by the “Allegory” which was germane to his subject. He refers to the opposition made against Isaac by the son of Hagar, recorded in Genesis 21:9. This received its counterpart in the attitude of the Judaisers toward Christians. They who still adhered to the old covenant were *hostile* to those who enjoyed the freedom of the new. Probably one reason why the Apostle mentioned this particular was in order to meet an objection: How can *we* be the “children of promise” (God's high favourites) seeing we are so bitterly hated and opposed by the Jews? The answer is, No marvel, for thus it was from the beginning: the carnal have ever persecuted the spiritual.

“Nevertheless what saith the Scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the free woman” (Gal 4:30). Here is the final point in the “allegory” (taken from Gen. 21:10, 12) and which incontestably clinched the Apostle's argument that Israel after the flesh was finally set aside by God. Hagar represented the Siniatic Covenant and Ishmael its carnal worshippers, and their being “cast out”—Abraham's household prophetically signified God's setting aside of Judaism and the fact that the natural descendants of Abraham had no place among his spiritual children and could not share their heritage (cf. John 8:34-35)—the two cannot unite: pure Christianity necessarily excludes Judaism. In its wider application (for today): none who seek salvation by law-keeping shall enter Heaven.

“So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free” (Gal. 4:31). Here the plain and inescapable conclusion is drawn: since Christians are the children of promise, they, and not carnal Jews, are the true heirs of Abraham. Since the new covenant is superior to the old and believers in Christ are freed from all debasing servitude, it obviously follows they must conduct themselves as the Lord's freeman: the time had now arrived when to cling to Judaism was *fatal*. The controversy turned on the question of who are the real heirs of Abraham—see Galatians 3:7, 16, 29. In chapter 4 the Apostle exposes the empty pretensions of those who could claim only fleshly descent from the Patriarch. *We* are the children of Abraham, said the Judaisers. Abraham had *two* sons, replies Paul, the one of free, the other of servile birth: to *which line* do you belong? whose spirit have you received?

To sum up. Paul's design was to deliver the Galatians from the Judaisers. He showed that by submitting to Judaism they would forfeit the blessings of Christianity. This he accomplished by opening up the profound significance of the Covenant “allegory,” which presented three principal contrasts: birth by nature as opposed to grace; a state of bondage as opposed to liberty; a status of temporary tenure as opposed to permanent possession. Just as Hagar was rightfully the handmaid of Sarah but was wrongfully accorded the position of Abraham's wife, so the Siniatic Covenant was designed to supplement the Abrahamic but was perverted by the Jews when they sought from it salvation and fruitfulness.—A.W.P.

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### **FIRST THINGS FIRST.**

The dawning of a new year is a fresh call unto each of us to put first things first, and it is only by heeding this call that we are prepared to start it aright. The greatest tragedy of life is that the vast majority of our fellows are dissipating their energies on secondary things, spending their strength for that which satisfies not. Alas, how much time have we wasted in the past! But a new year affords us another opportunity to mend our ways: how much of it, then, are we going to improve and conserve for eternity? The answer to that question will be determined by how far we put first things first.

It is one thing to recognize and realize that it is both our duty and wisdom to put first things first, and quite another to actually do so. It is much to be thankful for when light from above makes plain the path wherein we should walk—yet something more than illumination is required in order for us to traverse the same. Strength, power, enablement, is indispensable—and *that* we have not by nature. Have we not already been made painfully aware of this fact? Then have we humbly acknowledged it to God, and sought from Him fresh supplies of grace? Let us say with Jehoshaphat, when the enemies of Israel assembled against them, “O our God, wilt Thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us: neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon *Thee*” (2 Chron. 20:12).

What is it to put first things first? First and supremely to give God Himself His rightful place in our lives and render to Him that which is His due. “Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his Redeemer the LORD of hosts: *I am the first*, and I am the last” (Isa. 44:6). The great “I am” is self-existent and self-

sufficient. Because He is the First, He should be first served. The world had its beginning from Him; we had ours, and therefore at the beginning of the year, and of each day, it deeply concerns us to take Him along with us. God is the sum of all excellence, being inexpressibly blessed in Himself. How He should attract us! God is possessed of infinite benevolence, which is guided by unerring wisdom, and He has all-mighty power at His disposal. What an Object for our most fervent affections! Shall, then, every glittering toy become a rival to this transcendently glorious Being and rob Him of our hearts?

Let us form the habit (if we have not already done so) of directing our first conscious thoughts unto Him who has preserved us through the night. Begin the day by definitely bringing the Lord God before your heart, contemplate His wondrous attributes, prostrate your soul before Him in worship, adore Him for His glorious perfections. Say with holy David, “My voice shalt Thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto Thee” (Psa. 5:3). Nor will this be either difficult or irksome if we turn the eyes of our souls unto Him: it is beholding the beauty of the Lord which puts in tune the strings of our harps, and enables us to make melody in our hearts unto Him. Nor is this all: by doing obeisance we promote obedience. By solemnly paying homage to God and rendering to Him the honour which is due His great name, we strengthen the obligations that we lie under to observe His statutes and keep His commandments. By our humble and frequent adoration of His perfections, conformity to His will will be easier, for His authority over us will be more strongly felt.

“Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). God is to be given the preference above all others. Let not any business prevent our seeking communion with Him nor hinder the maintenance of it. There are many things we would like to do, but other things deter us. We wish to visit a dear friend, but the pressure of other concerns thwarts us. But this must never be the case with our seeking unto *God*: that is the “one thing needful” to which everything else must be made to give way. It is not at all necessary to our highest good that we be great in the world or advance our estate in it to such and such a pitch—but it is absolutely essential that we obtain God's favour and keep ourselves in His love. No worldly business whatsoever can serve to excuse our attendance upon God; nay, the more important our worldly business be, the more need have we to apply ourselves to God by prayer for His help in and blessing upon it. The closer we keep to God in prayer, the more likely are our affairs to prosper.

Second, to yield ourselves up unreservedly to God. Of the Corinthian saints we read that they “*first* gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5), which should be done by us at the beginning of each day. This means that they (1) gave their hearts to Him, being won by His loveliness; that they (2) surrendered their wills to Him, to be governed by Him; that they (3) devoted their lives to Him, seeking His honour and glory. “In the way of Thy judgments, O LORD, have we waited for Thee; the desire of our soul is to Thy name, and to the remembrance of Thee. With my soul have I desired Thee in the night; yea, with my spirit within me will I seek Thee early” (Isa. 26:8, 9). Our desire must be not only towards the good things that He gives, but towards God Himself—His favour and love, the manifestation of His name to us, and the influences of His grace upon us. Our wills are to be surrendered to God, as the servant is yielded to his master's pleasure, in everything consulting his desires and interests. God's will is to be our sole rule, His precepts the regulator of all we engage in. Our lives are to be devoted to His glory: acknowledging Him in all our ways, following Him fully as Caleb did.

Third, to keep our hearts with all diligence (Prov. 4:23). It is not enough that our outward conduct be proper—the springs from which it issues must be right. “Cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also” (Matt. 23:26). The stream itself cannot be sweet if the fountain-head be foul. A corrupt tree will not bear wholesome fruit. Alas, how widely neglected is this inward cleansing! How generally is external reformation substituted for internal mortification. And why is this?—because we are far more concerned about the approval of our fellow-creatures than we are to obtain the approbation of our *Creator*. Our actions come beneath the gaze of man, but the springs from which they proceed are under the scrutiny of God. He who “weigheth the spirits” (Prov. 16:2) demands purity of heart. We are required to judge the motives which actuate us, to make conscience of evil lustings and vain imaginations, to take ourselves to task for wandering thoughts when engaged in Divine worship.

Fourth, to manifest godliness in the family circle: “let them learn first to show piety at home” (1 Tim. 5:4). Here is another God-appointed “first” which is most necessary for us all to heed—but we would specially press it upon the attention of those who are so anxious to engage in what they term “service for the Lord.” The “service” which God requires from all of His people is not a running about here and there, asking impertinent questions of total strangers and prattling to them about Divine things, but to be in subjection to Himself, to walk obediently to His Law. To talk to people about Christ is far easier than the task *He* has assigned—to deny self, take up our cross, and follow Him. Actions speak louder than words: it is by our conduct we are to make manifest Whose we are. Christians are to “show forth” by their *lives* (rather than tell forth with their lips) “the praises of Him who has called them” (1 Peter 2:9). And they are “first to show piety at home,” then in the Church, and then in the world, for if there be no piety in our home life, then all our seeming piety in the Church and before the world is but humbuggery and hypocrisy.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *1. Introduction.*

Two things are absolutely essential for the maintenance of vital godliness: the profession of its truth and the practice or exercise of its power, for they mutually assist each other. Where there is no profession of faith in its truth, none will express its power in obedience; and without obedience, profession is worthless. Clearly is this exemplified in connection with the Holy Sabbath. In proportion as the pulpit has failed to insist on and press the claims of the Sacred Day, vital godliness has been weakened and all but destroyed, and commensurate with the growth of an empty profession has been the decay of genuine piety. Things have now come to such a deplorable pass that we may well exclaim, "Truth is fallen in the street" (Isa. 59:14), yea, is being ruthlessly trampled under foot, not only by the masses in general but also by the great majority of those in high places. It is therefore incumbent upon all who fear and love God to do whatever lies within their power to rescue the Sabbath from its present profanation.

Whatever furnishes help, according to the revealed will of God, in the promotion of good works, is greatly to be valued, especially so in a time when the profession of the Truth is being so widely called into question, and its practice not only neglected but despised. Now nothing is so well calculated to accomplish this end than the solemn observance of a weekly day of rest, hallowed unto God, for that lies at the very foundation of all true piety. Rightly did John Owen affirm, "Amongst all the outward means of conveying to the present generation that rule which was at first taught and delivered by Jesus Christ and His Apostles, there hath been none more effectual than the universal uninterrupted observance of such a day for the

celebration of the religious worship appointed in the Gospel. The profession of our Christian religion in the world at this day doth depend upon it. How much it tends to the exercise and expression of the power of religion cannot but be evident to all, unless they be such as hate it.”

The Lord's Day has ever been a precious boon to all genuine Christians. Occupied as most of them are with worldly concerns during the remainder of the week, they feel that but for this merciful restraint of one day in seven devoted to the worship and service of God, they would soon become wholly absorbed in the things of time and sense. But the Sabbath and its holy exercises restores the claims of God to an ascendance over their minds. On this day they are led to examine their spiritual progress, reflect upon their duties, meditate on the grand truths of Divine revelation, and prepare for eternity. By faithfully discharging the obligations of this Sacred Day their souls are cleansed from the defilement contracted during the week, their affections raised unto things above, and new strength is obtained for the engagements which lie before them. Christians generally know full well that they owe much of their growth in grace to the blessings of the Sabbath.

Again—attention should be called to the vast amount of benevolent Christian effort which has resulted from the instrumentality of the Sabbath. It has been pertinently pointed out, “If all those who have to secure their livelihood by bodily or mental exertion were obliged to labour through seven days of the week as they now labour through six of them, how few would have time or strength to visit the poor, to teach the young, or to speak of Christ to the ungodly! But through this ordinance of the Sabbath hundreds of thousands of persons in this country, who devote six days to hard labour, bodily or mental, give a part of their Sabbath to the religious instruction of the young and ignorant. Without the Sabbath, nearly all the inappreciable good which is now done by Sabbath Schools, and much of that which attends the visiting of the sick and distressed in cities, would vanish from the land” (W. B. Noel).

“The Sabbath was made for man”: God has graciously sanctified it for the good of the whole world. It is highly probable that more persons are converted to the Lord on that day than all the other six together. When anyone is awakened to a concern about his soul, he naturally looks forward to the return of that time when he can most successfully seek his spiritual good. Moreover, how many there are who, though not earnestly inquiring after God, yet attend public worship, and there learn much of the letter of Scripture and acquire some respect for its authority, who otherwise would grow up as heathens. Furthermore, since the Sabbath alone releases hundreds of the disciples of Christ from secular labours to employ a part of their energies in the instructing of the ignorant, who can say how much of the religious knowledge and moral principle which still exists in our nation, is instrumentally due to the institution of this Sacred Rest?

Godliness has never flourished in the world from its foundation till now, nor will it ever do so, without a due attendance upon this Divine ordinance, and it requires very little perspicuity to foresee what increasing disorder and disaster will yet ensue if it be totally disregarded. It is an incontestable fact that the times when the Sabbath's sanctity was most faithfully proclaimed and maintained in the British Isles—and we may add, in the U.S.A.—were those in which true spirituality was healthiest and vital godliness was in its most flourishing state. The men to whom, under God, we owe this, are the ones whose writings are still among the most precious treasures of English religious literature. A right observance of the Lord's Day lies at the foundation of national happiness and prosperity. So prolific of good is this blessed day that its

powerful influences on the well-being of our kingdom vitally affects its spiritual intelligence, the morality of its social order, and the liberties of its people.

So far, then, from the Sabbath law being a heavy burden which God has laid on His creatures, it is a noble boon and an inestimable blessing. So far from its being an unkind deprivation of our liberty, its right observance makes for an entrance into real spiritual freedom. “God blessed the seventh day” (Gen. 2:3). The Sabbath was Divinely designed, from its original institution, to be a day of blessing to all who duly observed it. Therefore has the Lord declared, “*Blessed is the man that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it*” (Isa. 56:2): it is not a day of irksome restraint, but one of peace and good. It is a gracious gift whereby, in the midst of our toils, we are granted a deliverance even from that curse, “in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground” (Gen. 3:19). Man's Maker has mercifully secured to him one seventh portion of his whole life wherein he may rest his wearied body and refresh his needy soul, by separating himself from the toil of this life and fixing his contemplation on the life to come.

The great excellence of this Divine grant lies not, as many seem to suppose, in a mere bodily blessing, appointed for the recuperation of our physical frame—that is but a secondary object; no, the abstention from mental and manual labours is not its primary use and purpose but is only preparatory to its great and chief design. The high and prime value of it lies in the salvation and sanctification of God's people, who experience growth in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord by obeying His Law and keeping faithfully His Sabbaths. As a means of grace towards our sanctification, none, under the blessing of God, is more effectual than the Sabbath. Our right observance thereof has the fullest assurance of that promise, “them that honour Me, I will honour.” Our happiness lies in the favour and service of God; that favour is “life” and that service is “perfect freedom.” Then let us do all that lies within our power—by precept, example, and encouragement—to maintain the claims of God's own day.

It lies not within the capacity of any mortal to adequately set forth the tremendous value and supreme moment of a Scriptural observance of the Holy Sabbath. Let us briefly call attention to a few features wherein and whereby the Holy Spirit has emphasized the fundamental importance of this Divine institution. It is placed on virtually the frontispiece of Divine revelation, for immediately after the account of creation we are informed that God Himself rested on that day and hallowed it. It was the very first lesson taught the children of Israel in the wilderness, impressed upon them by the Lord's withholding a supply of manna on that day (Exo. 16). It was made the outstanding “sign” between Jehovah and His people (Exo. 31:13). The most fearful judgments were sent upon them for their violation of the Fourth Commandment. The Lord Jesus set His imprimatur upon it in an unmistakable manner (Luke 4:16). Finally, the Spirit Himself placed special stress upon this holy ordinance by communicating the last book of Scripture to John on that day (Rev. 1:10).

To be guilty of desecrating the Holy Sabbath is therefore no light matter, my reader. The violation of the Fourth Commandment is a sin of the gravest and blackest kind; yet, sad to say, the profanation of the Lord's Day has become one of the most common crimes of our perverse generation; yea, so general is its pollution that few have any conscience on the matter, but placidly take it as a matter of course. The world has turned the Holy Day into a holiday, and even the majority of professing Christians join hands with them therein. No wonder God is displeased with us as a people, and is more and more evidencing His

displeasure against us. Britain has disturbed God's rest, and He is now disturbing Britain's rest; and unless we repent of and forsake this sin as a Nation, then we are most certainly treasuring up to ourselves wrath against the day of wrath.

Fully assured that the sanctification of the Sabbath is indispensable for the promotion of the manifestative glory of God, the health and prosperity of His people, the salvation of sinners, and the national well-being; firmly convinced that the desecration of this Blessed Day is our greatest and most grievous national sin, on account of which the Lord is visiting us with judgment, which ominously threatens to become far more severe unless we mend our ways—this writer dares not remain silent thereon, but determines to use whatever influence he possesses in pressing the claims of this sacred and grand institution. Then let all who fear the Lord, who dread His displeasure, who desire to see a revival of vital godliness in the churches, and who love their country and wish to save it from being completely paganized, resolve and determine, “as for me and my house,” we will “remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.”

If the Sabbath were of little or no value, there would be some excuse for standing by and leaving it to its assailants. But since it *is* of Divine appointment, since its weighty and venerable claims are as binding on us today as they were upon God's people in Old Testament times, since the Lord is very jealous of its sanctity (honouring the nation which respects it and visiting His indignation upon those who pollute it), since its proper observance is fraught with such spiritual blessing to the churches and moral and temporal good to the country, then we should do no less than evidence an uncompromising firmness, yet reasonable and enlightened zeal, in doing all we can to preserve this imperiled treasure, and thus secure for future generations a boon won for ourselves by the efforts, sacrifices, and prayers of godly progenitors. Thus did our forefathers, and woe be unto us if we now squander our birthright.

In view of all that has been pointed out above, is it not tragic beyond words to witness not only the general indifference of the vast majority of professing Christians unto the claims of the Holy Sabbath and to the world's awful profanation of it, but also to find that many influential men among the reputedly orthodox sections of Christendom—the “leaders of Christian thought”—should oppose those who are striving for the preservation of this spiritual heritage? These men are seeking to destroy its very foundations by teaching that the Sabbath is only a Jewish institution, and therefore is not binding upon us today. Unspeakably sad is it to find some whom we must regard as brethren in Christ, and who are standing firmly for the Divine inspiration and authority of the Scriptures, yet in this vital matter making common cause with the Lord's enemies.

John Owen commenced his exercitations on the Day of Sacred Rest by citing, “God hath made man upright, but they have sought out many inventions” (Eccl. 7:29), adding, “The truth hereof we also find by woeful experience, not only in sundry particular instances, but in the whole course of men in this world, and in all their concerns with respect to God. There is not anything wherein and whereabouts they have not found out many inventions, to the disturbance and perverting of that state of peace and quietness wherein all things were made of God . . . An evident instance we have hereof in the business of a day of sacred rest and the worship of God therein required.”

If this justly renowned Puritan had cause to complain in his time at the many controversies which had been

raised about this Divine institution, “agitating among men of all sorts,” and who grieved over their inventions, “to our own disturbance and to the perverting of the right ways of God,” we wonder how he would feel could he take a survey of the present situation. O what “inventions” have professing Christians resorted to in their efforts to set aside the Holy Sabbath, inventions which have greatly influenced the minds of multitudes and enervated them in the practice of that piety which the Lord's Day inculcates and stimulates. How happy Satan must be when he succeeds in moving “Bible teachers” to affirm that the Sabbath is not for us. It is Christ being again wounded in the house of His friends.

Such opposition to the Sabbath is a challenge to all who prize and revere it. The more it be opposed by assailants, the more firmly and unitedly must its lovers rise up in its defense. When some would set aside the Sabbath as a day of rest and worship on the ground of our being under a more spiritual dispensation, we must show the utter fallacy of such an absurd conclusion. Is the secularization of the Sabbath more befitting a spiritual dispensation than the religious observance of it!—more calculated to promote vital godliness, than the dedication of it to holy exercises and attendance on the means of grace? The question answers itself. Then if you, my reader, love the Sabbath because you have found that its devout and dutiful employment has brought you many blessings, it is your bounden duty to spread the knowledge of its claims throughout the land. Pray that it may please the Lord to bless this humble effort to such an end.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1939

### **FAMILY WORSHIP.**

There are some very important outward ordinances and means of grace which are plainly implied in the Word of God, but for the exercise of which we have few, if any, plain and positive precepts; rather are we left to gather them from the example of holy men and from various incidental circumstances. An important end is answered by this arrangement: trial is thereby made of the state of our hearts. It serves to make evident whether, because an expressed command cannot be brought requiring its performance, professing Christians will neglect a duty plainly implied. Thus, more of the real state of our minds is discovered, and it is made manifest whether we have or have not an ardent love for God and His service. This holds good both of public and family worship. Nevertheless, it is not at all difficult to prove the obligation of domestic piety.

Consider first the example of Abraham, the father of the faithful, and the friend of God. It was for his domestic piety that he received blessing from Jehovah Himself. “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment” (Gen. 18:19). The Patriarch is there commended for instructing his children and servants in the most important of all duties, “the way of the Lord”—the truth about His glorious Person, His high claims upon us, His requirements from us. Note well the words, “He will command them”: that is, he would use the authority God had given him as father and head of his house, to enforce the duties of family godliness. Abraham also prayed with, as well as instructed his family: wherever he pitched his tent, there he “built an altar to the Lord” (Gen. 12:7; 13:4). Now, my readers, we may well ask ourselves, are we “Abraham's

seed” (Gal. 3:29) if we “do not the works of Abraham” (John 8:39) and neglect the weighty duty of family worship?

The example of other holy men are similar to that of Abraham's. Consider the pious determination of Joshua who declared to Israel, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD” (24:15). Neither the exalted station which he held, nor the pressing public duties which devolved upon him, were allowed to crowd out his attention to the spiritual well-being of his family. Again—when David brought back the ark of God to Jerusalem with joy and thanksgiving, after discharging his public duties he “returned to bless his household” (2 Sam. 6:20). In addition to these eminent examples we may cite the cases of Job (1:5) and Daniel (6:10). Limiting ourselves to only one in the New Testament, we think of the history of Timothy, who was reared in a godly home. Paul called to remembrance the “unfeigned faith” which was in him, and added, “which dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice.” Is there any wonder, then, that the Apostle could say, “*from a child* thou hast known the Holy Scriptures” (2 Tim. 3:15).

On the other hand, we may observe what fearful threatenings are pronounced against those who disregard this duty. We wonder how many of our readers have seriously pondered those awe-inspiring words, “Pour out Thy fury upon the heathen that know Thee not, and upon the families that call not on Thy name” (Jer. 10:25). How unspeakably solemn to find that *prayerless families* are here coupled with the heathen that know not the Lord. Yet need that surprise us? Why, there are many heathen families who unite together in worshipping their false gods. And do not *they* put thousands of professing Christians to shame? Observe, too, that Jeremiah 10:25 recorded a fearful imprecation upon both classes alike: “Pour out Thy fury upon.” How loudly should those words speak to us!

It is not enough that we pray as private *individuals* in our closets; we are required to honour God in our *families* as well. At least twice each day, in the morning and the evening, the whole household should be gathered together to bow before the Lord—parents and children, master and servant—to confess their sins, to give thanks for God's mercies, to seek His help and blessing. Nothing must be allowed to interfere with this duty: all other domestic arrangements are to bend to it. The head of the house is the one to lead the devotions, but if he be absent, or seriously ill, or an unbeliever, then the wife should take his place. Under no circumstances should family worship ever be omitted. If we would enjoy the blessing of God upon our family, then let its members gather together daily for praise and prayer. “Them that honour Me, I will honour” is His promise.

An old writer well said, “A family without prayer is like a house without a roof, open and exposed to all the storms of Heaven.” All our domestic comforts and temporal mercies issue from the loving kindness of the Lord, and the least we can do in return is to gratefully acknowledge, together, His goodness to us as a family. Excuses against the discharge of this sacred duty are idle and worthless. Of what avail will it be when we render an account to God for the stewardship of our families, to say that we had no time available, working hard from morn till eve? The more pressing be our temporal duties, the greater our need of seeking spiritual succour. Nor may any Christian plead that he is not qualified for such work: gifts and talents are developed by use and not by neglect.

Family worship should be conducted reverently, earnestly, and simply. It is then that the little ones will

receive their first impressions and form their initial conceptions of the Lord God. Great care needs to be taken lest a false idea be given them of the Divine Character, and for this the balance must be preserved between dwelling upon His transcendency and imminence, His holiness and His mercy, His might and His tenderness, His justice and His grace. Worship should begin with a few words of prayer invoking God's presence and blessing. A short passage from His Word should follow, with brief comments thereon. Two or three verses of a Psalm may be sung. Close with a prayer of committal into the hands of God. Though we may not be able to pray eloquently, we should earnestly. Prevailing prayers are usually brief ones. Beware of wearying the young ones.

The advantages and blessings of family worship are incalculable. First, family worship will prevent much sin. It awes the soul, conveys a sense of God's majesty and authority, sets solemn truths before the mind, brings down benefits from God on the home. Personal piety in the home is a most influential means, under God, of conveying piety to the little ones. Children are largely creatures of imitation, loving to copy what they see in others. "He established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which He commanded our fathers that they should make them known to their children: That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children: That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments" (Psa. 78:5-7). How much of the dreadful moral and spiritual conditions of the masses today may be traced back to the neglect of their fathers in this duty? How can those who neglect the worship of God in their families look for peace and comfort therein? Daily prayer in the home is a blessed means of grace for allaying those unhappy passions to which our common nature is subject.

Finally, family prayer gains for us the presence and blessing of the Lord. There is a promise of His presence which is peculiarly applicable to this duty: see Matthew 18:19, 20. Many have found in family worship that help and communion with God which they sought for with less effect in private prayer.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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February, 1939

### REJOICING IN THE LORD.

“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4). How many there are today who make an entirely wrong use of this Divine exhortation. Let any servant of God faithfully trace out the inward experiences of a Christian, let him describe the painful discoveries of “the plague of his own heart” (1 Kings 8:38), and his daily conflict with his corruptions and the corresponding effect this produces in the dampening of his spirits. Let him point out how well-suited to his case is the humiliating lament of Romans 7:24, and the light-hearted and empty-headed religionists of the day will promptly (we do not say “quote,” but) *hurl* at his head these words—“rejoice in the Lord always.” Those who thus misuse our text suppose that its happy strains condemn all gloominess in a Christian, and that it goes to show that one who is groaning is living far below his privileges.

There is a large percentage of people in Christendom today who imagine the interests of Christ and His Cause on earth require that the somber side of things should be steadily kept out of sight—that only the joyousness of Christianity should be exhibited. They think that it is the pressing duty of saints to attract the unregenerate and not repel them by their heaviness. But that is a most mischievous misconception, a serious error, for it would be but a *one-sided* and therefore a *false* representation of vital godliness. It is an essential part of piety to make conscience of sin and to grieve over it. Christ never rebuked the penitent but declared, “Blessed are ye that weep now, for ye shall laugh; Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep” (Luke 6:21, 25). Surely we are not to hide that aspect of piety which God specially delights in: “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My

Word” (Isa. 66:2).

It is true that those of a *naturally* bright temperament and happy disposition may find it easy to present an attractive face to the world, but will it be to themselves or to Christ that they will draw the ungodly? Let that question be seriously pondered by those who insist that a smiling countenance is highly desirable. “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.” What does the repetition of this exhortation argue? Does it denote that the Christian is always happy? No indeed; the very reverse. Is it not because the saint is so often cast down, because he finds so much both in himself and what is going on around to sadden him, that he is directed to look above to and rejoice in the Lord?

Study carefully the picture of the “Blessed” man which Christ has drawn for us in Matthew 5:1-11, and it will be seen that each feature in that portrait depicts the Christian as sorrowful so long as he is upon earth. Is he “poor in spirit”? then assuredly will he feel pain from a pressing sense of want. Does he “mourn”? then it would be downright hypocrisy to pretend he is joyful. Is he “meek”? but such a spiritual grace is only evidenced by his submitting to the test of grievous afflictions. Does he “hunger and thirst after righteousness”? then he can be no stranger to an experience of feeling weak and unworthy. “Merciful”: such a disposition cannot remain unmoved amid abounding misery in the world. “Pure in heart” necessarily entails grief over impurity. “Peacemakers” cannot but be saddened as they behold millions of their fellows striving against their Maker.

On the other hand, there are not a few among the Lord's people whose tendency is to go to an opposite extreme, being afraid to rejoice in the Lord lest they be guilty of presumption. They who are most painfully conscious of the sea of iniquity surging within, feel it would be hypocrisy to joy in God and sing His praises. But let it be carefully borne in mind that the same human instrument who cried, “O wretched man that I am,” penned this very exhortation. However low the true believer may sink in his feelings, however cold and barren his heart, there is still abundant cause for him to heed this injunction. He is not bidden to rejoice in his own experiences or attainments, but “in the Lord.” It is a call to the exercise of faith, of hope, of love.

Though poor in this world's goods, though grieving the loss of loved ones, though suffering pain of body, though harassed by sin and Satan, though hated and persecuted by worldlings, whatever be the case and lot of the Christian, it is both his privilege and duty to rejoice in the Lord. He has given us abundant cause so to do: His favour, love, faithfulness, longsuffering, granting us access to the Throne of Grace, the privilege of communion with Himself (in our sorrows and trials!), the promise of an eternity of bliss in His presence—all call for gladness and praise. This exhortation to rejoice in the Lord does not mean we are bidden to cast all sorrow out of our hearts, nor are we acting contrary to its terms when we grieve over sin. Godly sorrow and holy joy are coinciding and not conflicting emotions: there is no enjoying the sweetness of the Lamb apart from the “bitter herbs” (Exo. 12:8).

To rejoice in the Lord is an act of *faith*, and therefore it lies not within the power of the creature to put it forth whenever *he* is so inclined. Do not despair, then, fellow-saint, because you are not able to reach this sphere of joy as and when you please. We are entirely dependent upon the Holy Spirit, here as everywhere—none but He can draw us to Christ and enable us to rejoice in Him. Very far are we from

being competent to master ourselves and overcome all the oppositions of sin. We are not the lords of our joy. We can no more make ourselves rejoice in God than we can make ourselves well when suffering from a dangerous and painful disease. Like all other exhortations, this one must be turned into earnest prayer for Divine enablement. Finally, note the very next words are, “Let your *moderation* (not hilarity) be known unto all men”!—A.W.P.

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February, 1939

### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *2. Its Institution.*

“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had made; and He rested on the seventh day from His work which He had made. And God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it: because that in it He had rested from all His work which God created and made” (Gen. 2:2, 3). Before commenting upon these verses perhaps it is well to make a few preliminary remarks thereon. First, let us point out how emphatically they repudiate the error of those who declare that the Sabbath was an institution peculiar to the Jews. More than two thousand years before the Lord entered into covenant with them at Sinai, the weekly day of sacred rest was appointed and consecrated by the Creator. Instead of its origin dating only from the time when the Ten Commandments were written on the tables of stone, its inception carries us right back to the very beginning of history. As we shall see (D.V.) when we come to examine Exodus 20, the Lord Himself there declared the Sabbath was as old as the world itself.

Not only is it a glaring mistake to suppose the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai, but it is equally wrong to insist that it is binding on Jews only. The reasons which Jehovah gave in Exodus 20:8-11 why the Sacred Day must be observed are just as pertinent to and incontestable for the Gentiles as they are for the Jews: the original occasion of its appointment and the design thereof hold good with equal respect for the entire human race. Nor is this any arbitrary assertion of ours. Nothing could be plainer than the words of our Redeemer: “the Sabbath was made for *man*” (Mark 2:27) and not merely for one small fraction of mankind. “The weekly day of rest is one of two things that were ordained in and have come from a sinless

Eden. The Sabbath was before Moses, before Abraham—the only other relic of the primitive Paradise is marriage—ideal marriage. As well make marriage a matter of Mosaic legislation as the Sabbath law, since both of them were instituted and ordained for man in Eden” (A. T. Pierson).

But plain though the above considerations be to any unprejudiced and simple reader of the Scriptures, there are those who raise cavils against them. Unwilling, at any price, to admit the Sabbath is binding on us today, various subterfuges have been resorted to in an endeavour to set aside the obvious meaning of Genesis 2:2, 3. Some have argued, “it only *seems* to import that the Sabbath was then instituted,” making out that this passage is to be understood only as giving “the reason of that particular day being chosen, not that it was then actually appointed and set apart.” To say that these verses contain merely an anticipation of the Fourth Commandment is handling the Word of God deceitfully. Those verses are the continuation of a plain historical narrative. Having finished the account of the creation of the world in the first chapter of Genesis, and given a recapitulation of it in 2:1, Moses declared what immediately followed thereon, namely, the rest of God on the seventh day and His blessing and sanctifying of that day.

For the special benefit of those who have sadly misrepresented the teaching of Calvin on this subject, we give a brief quotation from the remarks of that renowned Reformer and expositor on this passage: “That blessing of the seventh day is nothing else than the solemn consecration of it; by virtue of which, God claims for Himself on that day the labours and occupations of men. It is, indeed, the proper study of their whole life to be exercised in considering the infinite goodness, justice, power, and wisdom of God, as displayed on the vast theater of Heaven and earth; but, lest men should apply less diligently to this than they ought, every seventh day was peculiarly set apart. God, therefore, first rested; then He blessed that rest, that it might be sacred among men through all coming ages; He consecrated each seventh day to rest, that His own example might furnish the perpetual rule. Not that God simply enjoined men to take their leisure every seventh day, as if He delighted in idleness; but that, being released from all business, they might with more freedom employ their minds on the Creator of the world—His own example stimulating them to the duty, and engaging them to its performance.”

Others have sought to base an argument on the fact that the actual word “Sabbath” is not found in Genesis 2, 3, but how futile is such a cavil may at once be seen by a reference to Exodus 20. When it pleased the Lord God to assume the immediate government over the people of Israel at Sinai, He not only restored the Sabbath to its original place of honour, but did so by recognizing it as an existing ordinance, re-enforcing a creation-institution. In referring back to Genesis 2, Jehovah expressly termed that first seventh day the Sabbath: “For in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth, the sea and all that in them is, and rested the *seventh* day, wherefore the Lord blessed the *Sabbath* day and hallowed it.” We will not waste any further time and space by considering other objections which the perversity and unbelief of man have brought against this simple passage.

The 2nd chapter of Genesis opens with the words, “Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them.” And then the very next thing we read of is the institution of the Sabbath rest. Thus, to appoint and sanctify the Sabbath was God's *first* act after the earth had been made fit for human habitation. Nothing could more emphatically press upon us the fundamental importance of this Divine ordinance, and the priority of its claims upon us—claims to which every consideration of selfish interests must be strictly

subordinated. “The weekly Sabbath, therefore, is the first institution of God, and bears on its very origin the stamp of a *universal* and *perpetual* appointment: good for man even when surrounded by the glories of Paradise that is lost—and much more so now, when called to struggle and prepare for the higher glories of the Paradise that is to be won” (P. Fairbairn).

Four things call for special consideration in the passage now before us. 1. The primal Sabbath *was a rest day*. Emphasis is laid upon this feature by the repetition in thought which is found in the two parts of Genesis 2:2. First, on the seventh day, “God *ended His work* which He had made.” Second, “and He *rested* on the seventh day from all His work He had made.” Therefore the prime element and basic truth connected with the Sabbath is *rest*. Before raising the question as to why God “rested,” let us offer a few remarks on the *nature* of His rest.

It has been said repeatedly by a certain class of expositors that this rest of God consisted of His *satisfaction* in the work of His hands, that it was God looking out in complacency over His fair creation. But, we are told, that this “rest” of God did not last for long: it was rudely broken by the entrance of sin, and ever since man fell God has been “working”—John 5:17 being appealed to in proof. That such a definition of the “rest” of God in Genesis 2:2 should have been received by a large number of the Lord's people, only goes to show how few of them ever do much thinking or studying for themselves. It also proves how the most puerile interpretations of Scripture are likely to be accepted, if they are made by reputable teachers, who on other matters are worthy of respect. Finally, it demonstrates what a real need there is for everyone of us to humbly, prayerfully, and diligently bring everything we read and hear to a rigid examination in the light of Holy Scripture.

That God's “rest” in Genesis 2:2 was *not* the complacency of the Creator prior to the entrance of sin, is unequivocally evidenced by the fact that Satan had fallen *before* the time contemplated in that verse. How could God look abroad upon creation with Divine contentment when the highest creature of all had become the blackest and basest of sinners? How could God find satisfaction in all the works of His hands when the anointed cherub had apostatised, and in his rebellion had dragged down with him “the third part” of the angels (Rev. 12:4)? No, this is manifestly untenable. Some other definition of God's “rest” must therefore be sought.

Now we need to pay very close attention to the exact wording here, as everywhere. Genesis 2:2 does not say (nor does Exo. 20:10) that God rested from *all* work, for that was not true. Genesis 2:2 is careful to say, “on the seventh day God ended His work which *He had made*,” and, “He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He *had made*.” And this brings out and calls attention to the basic feature and primal element in the Sabbath: it is a resting from the activities commonly pursued during the six working days. But the Sabbath day is not appointed as a day for the cessation of *all* activities—to remain in bed and sleep through that day would not be spending the Sabbath as God requires it to be spent. What particular works are required and are permissible, we shall (D.V.) show later; but what we would now press upon the reader is the fact that, according to Genesis 2:2 the Sabbath rest consists of ceasing from the labours of the working week.

Genesis 2:2 does not state that on the seventh day God did no work, for, as we have seen, that would not

have been true. God *did* work on the seventh day, though His activities on that day were of a *different nature* from the ones in which He had been engaged during the preceding days. And herein we see not only the marvellous accuracy of Scripture, but the perfect *example* God set before His people, for as we shall yet show, there *are* works suited to the Sabbath. For God to have ceased from all works on that first seventh day in human history, would have meant the total destruction of all creation. God's *providential* workings could not cease, or no provision would be made for the supply of His creatures' wants. "All things" needed to be "upheld" or they would have passed into non-entity.

Let us fix it firmly in our minds that rest is not inertia. The Lord Jesus has entered into "rest" (Heb. 4:10), yet is He not inactive, for He ever lives to make intercession. And when the saints shall enter their eternal rest, they shall not be inactive, for it is written, "And His servants shall *serve* Him" (Rev. 22:3). So here with God. His rest on that first Sabbath day was not a rest of total inactivity. He rested from the work of creation and restoration, but He then began (and has never ceased) the work of Providence—the providing of supplies for His myriad creatures.

But now the question arises, *why* did God rest on the seventh day? Why did He so order it that all the works recorded in Genesis 1 were completed in six days, and that then He rested? Certainly it was not because the Creator needed rest, for, "the Creator of the ends of the earth fainteth not, neither is weary" (Isa. 40:28). Why, then, did He "rest," and why is it so recorded on the top of the second page of Holy Writ? Surely there can be only one answer: *as an example* for man! Nor is this answer merely a logical or plausible inference of ours. It rests on Divine authority. It is based directly upon the words of none other than the Son of God, for He expressly declared, "The Sabbath was made *for man*" (Mark 2:27): made not for God, but for man. Nothing could be plainer, nothing simpler, nothing more unequivocal.

2. The next thing that we would carefully note in this initial reference to the Sabbath is that Genesis 2:3 tells us this day was blessed by God: "and God *blessed* the seventh day." The reason why God blessed the seventh day was not because it was the seventh, but because, "in it He had rested." Hence, when the Sabbath law was written upon the tables of stone, God did not say, "Remember the seventh to keep it holy," but "Remember the *Sabbath* day to keep it holy." And again, He did not say, "He blessed the seventh day and hallowed it," but, "He blessed the *Sabbath* day and hallowed it."

But why should He do so? Why single out the seventh day thus? Young's Concordance defines the Hebrew word for "blessed" here as "to declare blessed." But why should God have "declared" the seventh day blessed? for there is no hint that He pronounced any of the other days blessed. Surely it was not for the mere day's sake. Only one other alternative remains: God declared the seventh day blessed because it was the Sabbath day, and because He would have every reader of His Word know, right at the beginning, that special *Divine blessing* marks its observance. This at once refutes a modern heresy and removes an aspersion which many cast upon God. The Sabbath was not appointed to bring man into bondage. It was not designed to be a burden, but a blessing! And if history demonstrates anything, it demonstrates beyond all room for doubt that the family or nation which has kept the Sabbath day holy, has been markedly *blessed* of God; and contrariwise, that the family or nation which has desecrated the Sabbath, has been *cursed* of God. Explain it as we may, the fact remains.

3. Genesis 2:3 teaches us that the Sabbath was a day set apart *for sacred use*. This comes out plainly in the words, “And God blessed the seventh day and *sanctified* it,” or as the R.V. has it, “God blessed the seventh day and *hallowed* it.” The prime meaning (according to its Scriptural usage) of the Hebrew word rendered “sanctified” or “hallowed” is to set apart for sacred use. This shows plainly that here in Genesis 2:3 we have something more than an historical reference to the rest of God on the seventh day, and even something more than God setting an example before His creatures. The fact that we are told God “sanctified” it, proves conclusively that here we have the original *institution* of the Sabbath, the Divine appointment of it for man's use and observance. As exemplified by the Creator Himself, the Sabbath day is separated from the six preceding days of manual labour.

4. Let us call attention to a notable *omission* in Genesis 2:3. If the reader will turn to Genesis 1 he will find that at the close of each of the six working days the Holy Spirit says, “and the evening and the morning were,” etc.: see Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, 31. But here in Genesis 2:2, 3 we do *not* read, “and the evening and the morning were the seventh day”; nor are we told what took place on the eighth day. In other words, the Holy Spirit has not mentioned the *ending* of the “seventh day.” Why is this? There is a reason for every omission in Scripture, a Divine reason; and there is a reason why the Holy Spirit omitted the usual formula at the close of the seventh day. We suggest that this omission is a silent but most significant intimation that the observance of the Sabbath *never would end*—it was to be perpetuated as long as time should last!

In conclusion it should be pointed out that Genesis 2 contains nothing whatever which enables us to determine *which day* of our week this primal “seventh day” was. We have absolutely no means of knowing whether that original seventh day fell on a Saturday, a Sunday, or any other day of the week—for the simple reason that we are quite unable to ascertain on which day that first week *began*. All we do know, and all which it is necessary for us to know is, that the seventh day was the day which followed six days of manual work. As to which day of the week is the Christian Sabbath we shall (D.V.) consider later.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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March, 1939

### **SPIRITUAL FLUCTUATIONS.**

“Because they have no changes, therefore they fear not God” (Psa. 55:19). As there are some people who uniformly enjoy good health, so there is a class of religious professors who appear to maintain one steady level of experience. There is no rise and fall of their emotional thermometer, no ebbs and flows in the tide of their energy, no ups and downs in their history. Their faith (such as it is) does not flag, their “assurance” is never eclipsed by the dark clouds of unbelief, their zeal continues lively to the end. Are such people to be envied or pitied? Perhaps such a question seems senseless. Does not the timid and trembling believer, whose case varies as often and as radically as the weather, frequently wish that his experience approximated far more closely to that which we have just described?

Surely such a uniform level of experience is greatly to be coveted. What more desirable than unruffled peace, unbroken confidence, uninterrupted joy. Ah, but all is not gold that glitters, and much that passes in the churches for the coin of Canaan lacks a genuine ring to it. We must needs inquire, Is such a peace that of the graveyard or the peace of Heaven? Is such confidence a carnal one, or the fruit of the Spirit? Is it a delusive or a substantial joy? In order to ascertain this, the question has to be raised, Is the fear of God upon such characters? Do they furnish any clear evidence that it is so? The solemn declaration of our text demands an impartial answer to these queries.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences in *his conflicts with sin*! At conversion it often seems as though the believer is completely delivered from all his spiritual enemies. His heart has been so melted

and drawn out Godwards, his sense of Christ dying on the Cross in his room and stead has imparted such a hatred and horror of evil, that he is filled with a desire and determination to live henceforth unto the pleasing of his Lord. He feels that the Song of Israel on the farther shores of the Red Sea (Exo. 15) is exactly suited to express his case. But how soon he discovers that the Wilderness of Sin lies between him and the Promised Land, and that though the Egyptians be dead there are Amalekites to assail him (Exo. 17:8). True, God grants him many a token of His favour along the way, and at each gracious reviving indwelling sin appears to slumber; but soon after it awakens and rages worse than ever, and, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14) becomes his cry.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his enjoyment of the Scriptures*! Often he is able to feelingly exclaim, “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:10). But alas, it is by no means always so. When fellowship with God is broken our relish is lost for His Word, and it becomes more or less neglected. Sad to relate it was thus with Israel of old: “But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all besides this manna before our eyes” (Num. 11:6). And, when the Lord chastens His child because of his waywardness, so far from His Word affording comfort, it pricks, condemns, and terrifies. How many a backslider has turned to the Word only to feel that the solemn curses pronounced upon the hypocrite and the apostate apply to his case.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his faith*! On some occasions his heart goes out instinctively to God so that he can exclaim, “I will trust and not be afraid” (Isa. 12:2); but at other times he is filled with doubts and fears, and is quite unable to lay hold of the Divine promises. Nor is this always explainable from the human side: when a Christian is walking closely with God and is conscious of no transgression, yet he is not lord of his faith, and is painfully reminded of the fact. What “changes” the faith of Abraham experienced: not fearing to leave Chaldea at the call of Jehovah, yet in the time of famine going down to Egypt—daring to arm his servants and rescue Lot from Chedorlaomer—yet on two occasions afraid to own Sarah as his wife; believing God that he should have a numerous seed, and then resorting to the unbelieving device of cohabiting with Hagar.

What “changes” the real Christian experiences *in his prayer life*! One day he is favoured with real freedom and his devotions are delightful, but another day he is bound in the spirit and his attempts at supplication are wearisome. O how different it is when the believer is favoured with conscious access to God and an answer of peace is granted him, from feeling that the Lord is far off and the heavens above are as brass. How different it is from having liberty in pleading the promises than deeming ourselves to have no right to appropriate them; from having importunity to plead our suit than a sense that it is useless to continue asking. And what a sore trial it is for the Christian when such an experience is protracted: then it is that he cries, “Oh that I were as in months past” (Job 29:2).

What “changes” the true Christian often experiences *in his outward lot*! For a time—perhaps for years—the smile of Providence is upon him, and then all is drastically altered. One trouble follows swiftly upon the heels of another, until the sorely tried soul is ready to say with Jacob, “all these things are against me” (Gen. 42:36). The strain of financial reverses and family bereavements undermines his health, and Satan takes full advantage of his low spirits and shattered nerves. Thoroughly dejected, he asks, “where are Thy former loving kindnesses?” (Psa. 89:49).

But such “changes” or afflictions are helpful, for they deeply exercise an honest heart, humble him before the Lord, cause him to tread more softly, and deepen his fear of God. Long continued ease and comfort produce the worst effects upon the godless, but the spiritual fluctuations to which we have alluded are a part of God's discipline for the believer's growth in piety. —A.W.P.

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### THE HOLY SABBATH.

#### 3. *Its History.*

In our examination of the original institution of the Holy Sabbath we pondered the three acts of the Creator as recorded in Genesis 2:3, each of which had distinct and special reference to man. First, God “*rested* on the seventh day,” thereby giving an example for us to follow. But this was not left to be vaguely inferred, for second, “God *blessed* the seventh day,” setting on it a special dowry for all who should give due heed to its proper end and object. “What men may lose for the moment in productive employment, shall be amply compensated by the refreshment it will bring to his frame—by the enlargement and elevation of his soul—above all, by the spiritual fellowship and interest in God which becomes the abiding portion of those who follow Him in their ways, and perpetually return to Him as the supreme rest of their souls” (P. Fairbairn). Third, God “*sanctified* it,” setting it sacredly apart from the other six days, thus conferring on it a distinctive character.

But in their efforts to evade the obvious force of Genesis 2:3 some have raised the objection that Genesis 2 records no express *command* for man to keep the Sabbath. Really, such a cavil is undeserving of notice, yet as a few readers are disturbed by it, we will briefly answer the objection. First, it is plainly required of us in and by the law of nature that some part of our time (Divinely given to us) should be set apart and devoted to God, for the solemn observance of His worship in the world. And where but in Genesis 2:3 could primitive man learn *which part* of that time was to be thus employed? That natural dictate is met by the Sabbath law requiring us to sanctify one day in seven. Second, this pretense of any obscurity that is in

the command of Genesis 2:3 is easily removed by another instance of like antiquity. It has been universally acknowledged that a promise of Christ was given in Genesis 3:15 for the faith of the ancients, yet that very verse was addressed to the Serpent in the form of a curse! With equal propriety, then, could we deny any *promise* in Genesis 3:15 and declare there is no *command* in Genesis 2:3—each is self-evidently implied.

Third, a yet more decisive consideration is found in our Lord's words, “the Sabbath was made for man” (Mark 2:27). This cannot mean less than that the Sabbath was made for man's observance and for his benefit. God's glory and our good are always inseparably connected: whatever He has appointed us to heed and do in order for His honour, it is equally our wisdom and gain to comply with. If, then, the Sabbath was made for man's observance, it is self-evident that he is under Divine authority to submit thereto. Ere passing from this verse, let it also be pointed out that since the Sabbath was necessary and profitable for man in his first estate, when free from sin—remember that man was not exempt from labour in Eden, as the words “to dress it and to keep it” (Gen. 2:15) prove!—then how much more so now in order to recover him from his corrupt condition!

In the remainder of this article we shall devote our attention to the primitive observance of the Holy Sabbath, confining ourselves to its history in the earliest ages, namely, to the recognition thereof before its formal renewal in Exodus 20. It is frequently asserted that the Sabbath law originated at the time when Jehovah wrote the Ten Commandments on the tables of stone. But as we have shown, that is an error. The Sabbath was instituted before man fell. We would now inquire what evidence is there of men's *keeping* the Sabbath prior to Israel's reaching Sinai. Before answering this question, let it be pointed out that if there were none at all this would by no means convince us that the Sabbath was unknown before Exodus 20. An argument drawn from *silence* is always inconclusive. No mention is made of circumcision from the time of Joshua until the Babylonian captivity, yet how fallacious would be the inference that the rite had ceased to be practiced! Even though the Sabbath occupies so prominent a place in the institutions of Moses, yet it is never mentioned again till the days of Elijah (nearly seven hundred years later), and then only an incidental allusion is made to it (2 Kings 4:23).

There would be no need to wonder, then, in such particularly brief compendiums of history as are given of antediluvian and Patriarchal times, if there should be a similar silence to those mentioned above. But is there a complete silence? Is there nothing in Scripture to indicate whether or not men kept the Sabbath before Israel reached Sinai? In seeking an answer we have to turn back to the book of Genesis and the first 18 chapters of Exodus, and ere we consult them it is well to remember their general character. No less than 25 centuries of human history are covered by those first 68 chapters of the Bible. Thus it is evident at once that the Holy Spirit has seen fit to give us little more than a bare outline of what transpired during the infancy of our race. Hence, we must not expect to find here anything more than a few references to the Sabbath, and these of the briefest nature. The same pertains to almost any other theme. There *are* unmistakable references to the Sabbath, but they are only *incidental* in character.

“And in the process of time (*at the end of days*) it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the LORD; and Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock” (Gen. 4:3, 4). The very fact of Cain and Abel coming together, and this for the purpose of presenting an offering to the Lord,

intimates that the time when they were thus engaged was a *stated* one, known to and recognized by them both—otherwise, what had induced the jealous Cain to unite with the pious Abel in this action? The bringing of offerings by Cain and Abel was the formal recognition of God: it was an act of devotion. Moreover, it is expressly stated that they worshipped God “at the end of days,” the Divinely appointed season. And *when* was that? Exactly what is signified by “the end of days”? Surely the unprejudiced reader who comes to the Scriptures in childlike simplicity, desiring to learn the mind of God, will form only one concept here. He will naturally say, Why, the end of days must be the end *of the week*, and that, of course, is the Sabbath.

But can we prove what has just been advanced? Yes, by an appeal to the context. If the first three chapters of Genesis be read through, it will be found they mention one “end” and one only, and that is in Genesis 2:3: “On the seventh day God *ended His work* which He had made.” Now as Scripture ever interprets Scripture, as its terms are defined by the way in which they are used in other passages, and as the law of the context is whatever fixes the meaning of any given clause, so here in Genesis 4:3, the “end of days” can only mean the end of the working week—the Sabbath. Thus this passage teaches us four things. First, that previous to the days of Cain and Abel a Sabbath had been instituted. Second, that this Sabbath came at the end of a week of work. Third, that it was recognized and owned by the sons of Adam and Eve. Fourth, that it was set apart for sacred use, namely, the worship of God.

We next turn to, “and he called his son Noah, saying, This same shall comfort us concerning our *work and toil* of our hands, because of the ground which the LORD hath cursed” (Gen. 5:29). Here we are told why Lamech named his son “Noah.” The very fact that the Holy Spirit has recorded this detail must be because some important truth is illustrated thereby. Names were not given in those early days at the idle caprice of the parents. They were pregnant with meaning, frequently given under Divine guidance, often memorializing some event of importance. Plainly was this the case in our present instance. Lamech belonged to the godly line, being the son of Methuselah (whose name was certainly given under Divine impulse), the grandson of Enoch. Lamech called his son Noah, which means *rest*, giving as his reason, “this same shall comfort us concerning our work and toil of our hands.” In the light of Genesis 2:3, 4, is not this profoundly suggestive? Did not Lamech, in the name given his son, express his gratitude to the great Creator for providing a weekly Sabbath as a rest from “work” and “toil”? It was a pious heart looking forward to *the Rest* of which the weekly Sabbath was both the type and pledge.

“And it came to pass on *the seventh day* that the waters of the flood were upon the earth” (Gen. 7:10, margin). This verse records the beginning of the great Deluge and its terms are the more noteworthy because in the next verse we read, “In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, in the *seventeenth day* of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up and the windows of Heaven were opened.” Surely the Spirit had some good reason for giving us *both* of these time-marks. The second of them is obviously the *historical* reference: why, then, are we first told that the Flood began “on the seventh day”? Clearly because the reference here is a *moral* one, a word of explanation. It makes known to us one of the reasons, perhaps the chief one, why God visited the earth with such sore judgment. It conveys a solemn message to us: the flood began on the Sabbath Day! Is not the inference inescapable? Was it not an act of, what men term, poetic justice? Doubtless the antediluvians had flouted the Sabbath institution as they had every other Law of God. They had desecrated His Holy Day: therefore,

when the Lord visited His wrath upon them it was on the Sabbath that the Flood commenced!

“And he stayed yet other *seven days* . . . and he stayed yet other *seven days*” (Gen. 8:10, 12). These references make it clear that way back in Noah's day the division of time into weeks was a recognized custom, for the repetition here makes it evident this was no casual or arbitrary act on his part. This fact has not received the attention it deserves. How was it, why was it, and when originated this division of time? We submit that this hebdomadal revolution of time furnishes another striking testimony to the primitive Sabbath. We quote now from the late B. H. Carroll, President of the S. W. Baptist Seminary:

“I ask you to notice this strange historical fact, that for all other divisions of time we have a reason in the motions of the heavenly bodies. The revolution of the earth around the sun marks the division of time into years. The moon's revolution around the earth gives us the month. The day comes from the revolution of the earth upon its axis. But from what suggestion of nature do you get the division of time into *weeks*? It is a positive and arbitrary division. It is based on authority. The chronicles of the ages record its recognition. But how did it originate? Here in the oldest book, in the first account of man, you will find its origin and purpose. Noah twice recognized it in the ark, when he waited seven days each time to send out his dove. Jacob in the days of his courtship found it prevalent when he looked for satisfaction in the laughing eyes of Rachel, and the stern father said, “fulfil her week” (Gen. 29:27). Why a week? How did he get it? It was God's division of time.

Yes, it was *God's* division of time. Why should our week have seven rather than six or ten days? and why have men everywhere adopted this measure? A primeval Sabbath explains it: it is the key to an otherwise insoluble enigma. Since there is no prominent natural phenomenon visible to every eye which can account for it, we are obliged to deduce some ancient institution coeval with our race, from which it spontaneously originated. That institution was the Sabbath, in which the Creator set apart one seventh of man's days for the worship of Himself. Thus did the Architect of the universe write His signature across time itself, and never shall it be erased.

In his masterly dissertations on the Sabbath, John Owen showed that no impartial and pious mind can entertain any doubt that there was a free observance of the Sacred Day by the Patriarchs: we give a very brief digest of his argument. The creation of the world was one of their principal articles of faith, as the Apostle asserts in Hebrews 11:3—then how vain to imagine they had utterly lost the tradition of the rest of God upon the finishing of His works. That the Patriarchs did observe the solemn worship of God in and with their families is clear from Genesis 18:19 and other passages, and for *that* some stated time was indispensably necessary; and what ground have we to suppose they were left without Divine direction in this important matter? The testimony which is given to them, that they walked with God and obtained a good report, the fact that they are said to have kept “the way of the Lord” and “His charge” (Gen. 26:5), all point to the same conclusion.

“And Abraham set *seven* ewe lambs of the flock by themselves” (Gen. 21:28). In this connection it is striking to note how that the ancients, universally, regarded the number seven as having a mystical significance. Seven times did Jacob bow before Esau in proof of his submission to him; seven years did he serve Laban for Rachel, and seven more for Leah. The number seven had, for some reason or other,

obtained special favour in the families of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The same obtained also among other branches of the race of Shem. The history of Job, for example, who lived in the early times of the postdiluvian age, relates that when his friends came to comfort him they, “sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights” (2:13)—and when (later) the Lord bade him offer sacrifice on their behalf, He said, “take unto you now *seven* bullocks and *seven* rams, and go to My servant Job,” etc., (42:8). Balaam evidenced the same mystical reverence for this number (Num. 23:1). This writer is firmly convinced that the sacredness which from earliest times attached to the mystical “seven” has its roots in the primeval Sabbath.

There is yet another trace of the Sabbath in the early ages of the world to be found in Exodus: a most striking one it is, though it seems to have quite escaped the notice of those who have written on this subject. One reason for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was that they might be free to keep the Sabbath and to offer those sacrifices and observe those ordinances which were connected with it. “Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Let My people go, that they may *hold a feast unto Me* in the wilderness” (5:1), “Let My people go, that they may *serve Me*” (9:1). Do not these words clearly imply that while sojourning in Egypt the Israelites had been prevented from observing their religious ordinances? Their merciless taskmasters had blotted out their Sabbath and made their life one ceaseless round of toil and misery. This is clearly confirmed by the words of Pharaoh to Moses and Aaron: “And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let (hinder) the people from their works? get you unto your burdens. And Pharaoh said, Behold, the people of the land now are many, and ye make them (not “cease” but) REST from their burdens” (Exo. 5:4, 5). Evidently one of the first things the intrepid Moses did when he returned to Egypt was to insist that his brethren keep the Sabbath, and hence Pharaoh's objection.—A.W.P.

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### **GOD'S GRACE AND PETER.**

“But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10). Though we have drawn so freely in our current articles on the manifestation of election, from the most excellent exposition of this verse given by Thomas Goodwin, we feel that it will be glorifying to God and helpful to our readers if we here insert verbatim the striking introduction which that Puritan gave to his comments on this passage. First, because it contains a very beautiful linking up of one passage with another, serving to show how wondrously Scripture itself interprets Scripture. Second, because the case of Peter himself serves to supply such a blessed illustration and demonstration of what is here declared: if notwithstanding his sad lapse, the God of all grace preserved him unto eternal glory, this is a sure pledge that He will do so with all believers.—A.W.P.

Our Apostle Peter had himself greatly suffered for a while. Satan sought to winnow and to devour him, but the God of all grace did, by Christ, and His fore-warning of him, and through His prayer for him, graciously restore, strengthen, settle, stablish him, as the story of the Evangelists and the Acts record. So all this was exemplified first in himself; and he, who himself hath been instructed in temptations and sufferings, is the ablest fore-warner and instructor of others. You know our Saviour did thereupon take occasion to command him, that, “when he should be converted or restored, he should strengthen his brethren” (Luke 22:32). And this our holy Apostle, you see, is carefully mindful of, and that to the utmost; and hath left it behind him for all his brethren to the end of the world, the greatest consolatory against

Satan and all temptations that hath in so few words fallen from any Apostle's pen.

And when I more seriously compare things together, I am strongly inclined to think and believe that Peter, in uttering these words of exhortation and comfort in verses 8-10, had those very passages of Christ to himself in his eye and view; and be yourselves the judges: “And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat” (Luke 22:31). Observe the parallel.

1. “Satan hath desired”; that is, obtained leave of God, by *seeking* “thee (Peter) to winnow thee” and shake forth all grace out of thee. Thus Christ to Peter. Correspondingly Peter here to us: “Satan, your adversary, goeth about *seeking* whom (of you) he may (have leave to) devour.” And as Christ gave Peter fore-warning there, so Peter here his brethren.

2. Christ prayed that his “faith fail not.” That was the matter of Christ's prayer for him on that occasion. Faith's not failing is Satan's foiling. Answerably the subject matter of our Apostle also in his exhortation here is, “whom resist steadfast in the faith,” as that which is the most effectual remedy and shield of resistance of all others (Eph. 6:16). It is not “in the faith” as understanding the *doctrine of faith* only, as some would seem to restrain it, because of the article (in the Greek), but in the *grace of faith*, as Calvin more genuinely stated. And the grace of faith is so eminent in itself, and hath so great an hand, and bears so great a stress in this business of temptation, that it deserves here the honour of this article.

3. “Strengthen thy brethren.” There are but two words, yet both are here in *terminus*. “Knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren in the world” (1 Peter 5:9), there is the one, and then, “after ye have suffered, God will strengthen you” (v. 10) there is the other. So publisheth he the comfort and concernment thereof to all his brethren in the world: and contents not himself to utter it barely in the very same word of strengthening, but further surroundeth that, for the more abundant consolation, for the multiplication of words to the same intent: He shall “restore you” (see Gal. 6:1); that is, when you are fallen—“set you in joint again,” which was Peter's very case: “stablish, strengthen, settle you.”

4. Lastly, which is not to be neglected, Christ, in strengthening Peter's faith against Satan, sets a, “*but* I have prayed,” as in direct opposition unto all that Satan could do; and Peter, when he had set forth Satan as our professed adversary in the greatest dreadfulness, he then in like manner of opposition, brings in his intended consolatory with a “*but* God, the God of all grace by Jesus Christ,” etc., set in full array and counter against him on our behalf, as our Undertaker, Guardian, and the strength of our hearts forever” (Thomas Goodwin).

N.B. It is indeed striking and most blessed to observe the particular instruments God employed as His penmen in the communicating of His Word, and how specially fitted and suited they were for their several tasks. Who, but Solomon was so well qualified, experimentally, to write the book of Ecclesiastes: the man who had such exceptional opportunity to drink from all the poor cisterns of this world, and then to record the fact that no satisfaction was to be found in any of them. Who was so eminently adapted to write upon the beautiful theme of Divine love (as he does throughout the Epistles) as the one who had been so peculiarly favoured as to lean upon the bosom of God's Beloved! So here: who could so feelingly write upon “the God of all grace” as poor Peter! If Saul of Tarsus is the supreme example in New Testament

times (for Manasseh is as remarkable a case in the Old Testament) of the wondrous *saving* grace of God, surely Simon is the most outstanding trophy, in New Testament times (for David parallels him in the Old) of God's *preserving* grace. And, my reader, it is the same today. When God calls any man into His service, He qualifies him for the particular work He has for him to do. Alas, how many run without being sent of Him.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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March, 1939

### OUR ADVOCATE.

“If anyone sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). He is the only Practicer in the Court of Heaven, and therefore He is full of the businesses of His Church. It is His office to dispatch the affairs of those that come under Him, and crave His favour and intercession to debate their causes; and He is both faithful and merciful in His place, and furnished with such unmeasurable unction of the Spirit and vast abilities to transact all the businesses of His Church, that whosoever comes unto Him for His counsel and intercession, “He will in nowise cast out,” or refuse their cause. And this is one great assurance that we may take comfort in: that be our matters never so foul and inexcusable in themselves, yet the very entertaining of Him of our counsel, (engaging of Him as our Counsel) and the leaning upon His wisdom, power, fidelity, and mercy to expedite our businesses, to compassionate our estate, and rescue us from our own demerits, does as it were, alter the property of the cause, and produce a clean contrary issue to that which the evidence of the thing in trial would of itself have created.

And as we may observe that men of extraordinary abilities in the law delight to wrestle with some difficult business, and to show their learning in clearing matters of greatest intricacy and perplexity, so does Christ esteem Himself most honoured, and the virtue and wisdom of His Cross magnified, when in cases of sorest extremity, of most hideous guilt, of the most black and uncomfortable darkness of soul, which pose (puzzle) not only the presumptuous, but the hope, faith, thoughts, contrivances which the hearts of men can even in wishes make to themselves for mercy, they do yet trust Him whose thoughts are infinitely above their thoughts, and whose ways above their ways (Isa. 55:8). “Who is there among you that feareth

the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His Servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? let him trust in the Name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isa. 50:10).

When the soul can go unto Christ with such complaints and acknowledgments as these: Lord, when I examine my cause by my own conscience and judgment of it, I cannot but give it over as utterly desperate and beyond cure. My bones are dried, my hope is cut off, I am utterly lost—my sins and my sorrows are so heavy that they have broken my spirit all to pieces, and there is no sound part in me. But Lord, I believe Thou knowest a way to make dead bones live (Ezek. 37:3). I believe that Thy thoughts and ways are above mine, that Thou knowest Thine own thoughts of peace and mercy (Jer. 29:11), though I cannot comprehend them, that Thy riches are unsearchable, that Thy love is above human knowledge, that Thy peace passes all created understanding. I know that though I am the greatest of all sinners, and feel enough in myself to sink me as low as Judas into Hell, yet Thou hast not left me without patterns of all longsuffering (1 Tim. 1:16), of Thy royal power in enduring, and in forgiving sins.

And now Lord, though Thou afford me no light, though Thou beset me with terrors, though Thou make me to possess the sins of my youth, yet I still desire to fear Thy name, to walk in Thy ways, to wait upon Thy counsel. I know there is not in men or angels so much wisdom, compassion, or fidelity as in Thee, and therefore if I must perish I will perish at Thy feet, I will starve under Thy table, I will be turned away and rejected by Thee, who hast promised to cast away none that come unto Thee. I have tried all ways, and I here resolve to rest and to look no further. Thou that hast kept such a sinner as I am out of Hell thus long, can by the same power keep me out forever. Upon Thy wisdom and compassion (who can make dried bones to flourish like an herb, and broken bones to rejoice and sing), I cast the whole weight of my guilty spirit—into Thy bosom I empty all the fears and requests of my distracted and sinking soul. I say when a man can thus pour out himself unto Christ, he esteems the value and power of His blood *most highly honoured*, when men believe in Him against reason and above hope, and beyond the experience or apprehensions they have of mercy; for Christ loves to show the greatness of His skill in the salvation of a Manasseh, a crucified thief, a persecutor, an injurious blasphemer, in giving life unto them that nailed Him to His Cross The more desperate the disease, the more honourable the cure.—(E. Reynolds, 1648).

It is indeed one of the most consolatory truths to be found in Divine revelation. Yea, to the editor it seems the crowning mercy of the Gospel, that the Judge of all the earth has graciously provided His erring people with an Advocate to plead their cause in the high court of Heaven: an Advocate who will not put in a single plea which is to the slightest degree opposed to the holy Law of God, who will not request the Judge to show leniency at the expense of righteousness, who will not make light of sin; yet One who is filled with compassion toward those who are out of the way, and One who will successfully silence him who is “the Accuser of the brethren.” Surely it is obvious that only One in all the universe is competent to serve in this capacity: that only One who is in Himself both Jehovah's Fellow and also the Firstborn among many brethren is qualified for such an office.

What comfort should penitent saints draw from this grand aspect of the Mediatorial office! “Penitent” ones we say, for so long as we remain indifferent to our breaches of God's Law and sins against His Gospel, we are not entitled to any spiritual comfort. This is a balm for *wounded* hearts, for those who are sick of sin. It is a cordial for the faint, for those who are cast down by their wretched failures. It supplies the self-judged

believer with an unanswerable reply to his arch-enemy, who would feign have him believe that he has forfeited the Divine favour and sinned beyond the hope of forgiveness. Not only does Satan denounce us before God, but he also accuses us in the court of conscience: yet just as Christ silences him in the one, so may we (by faith's appropriation of Christ's Advocacy) silence him in the other.

How much we owe to Christ's advocacy we shall never fully know down here. When Satan has beguiled us into wrong-doing, when our communion with God is broken and our hearts become cold, hard and prayerless, there is One on high who makes intercession for us. And is not the immediate effect of this that, in due course, we are made conscious of our wrongdoing, brought to confess our wickedness, beg the Father to forgive us, and then are granted a fresh token of His love? Surely these are nothing else than the fruits of Christ's advocacy on our behalf. Then let us not fail to thank God not only for One who died for us, but who now lives to make intercession for us. —A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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April, 1939

### THE BEAUTY OF HOLINESS.

“Worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness” (Psa. 29:2). Holiness is the antithesis of sin, and the beauty of holiness is in direct contrast from the ugliness of sin. Sin is a deformity, a monstrosity. Sin is repulsive, repellent to the infinitely pure God: that is why He selected leprosy, the most loathsome and horrible of all diseases, to be its emblem. When the Prophet was Divinely inspired to depict the condition of degenerate Israel it was in these words, “From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrifying sores” (Isa. 1:6). O that sin were sickening and hateful to us: not merely its grosser forms, but sin itself. At the opposite extreme from the hideousness of sin is “the *beauty* of holiness.” Holiness is lovely in the sight of God: necessarily so. It is the reflection of His own nature, for He is “glorious in holiness” (Exo. 15:11). O that it may be increasingly attractive to and earnestly sought after by us. Perhaps the simplest way of bringing out the beauty of holiness will be to contrast it from the beauties of time and sense.

First, the beauty of holiness is *imperceptible to the natural man*, and therein it differs radically from the beauties of mere nature. He can behold and admire a lovely glen, the softly flowing river, the mountain pines, the rushing waterfall; but for the excellence of spiritual graces he has no eyes. He regards one who (by grace) meekly submits to sore trials as a milksop. He looks upon one who denies self for Christ's sake as a fool. He considers the man who adheres strictly to the narrow way as one who misses the best of this life. The natural man is totally incapable of discerning the excellence of that which is of great price in the sight of God. Do some think we are stating this too strongly? Then let them be reminded of the solemn fact

that when the Holy One tabernacled here upon earth the unregenerate saw in Him “no beauty” that they should desire Him (Isa. 53:2); and it is the same today. God must remove the scales from the eyes of our heart before we can perceive that holiness is beautiful.

Second, the beauty of holiness is *real and genuine*, and therein it differs radically from much of the beauty which is seen in this world. How much that appeals to the gaze of the natural man is artificial and fictitious. How much human beauty is made up, the product of the artifices of the salon. Even when physical beauty is natural, how rarely it is accompanied by moral virtues. No wonder our forefathers were accustomed to say, “Beauty is but skin deep.” Not so the beauty of holiness: it is rooted in the inner man, and sheds its purifying influence over the entire being. “Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain” (Prov. 31:30). But holiness disappoints not its possessor, for its beauty is spiritual and Divine. True, it has many counterfeits in the religious world, yet the genuine article has a ring to it which the godly cannot mistake.

Third, the beauty of holiness is *abiding*, and therein it differs radically from all the beauty of earth. The wooded glen, whose varied tints are so pleasing in the summer sunlight, is leafless and drab when winter comes. The glorious sunset which human skill can neither produce nor adequately reproduce disappears within a few minutes. The fairest human countenance quickly withers: “all her beauty is departed” (Lam. 1:6). Even when it is preserved to the end of a short life, “their beauty shall consume in the grave” (Psa. 49:14). Yes, change and decay in all we see. The only beauty which is unfading and everlasting is the beauty of holiness. The fruit of the Spirit will never lose its bloom: spiritual graces shall endure after this poor world has all gone up in smoke. How fervently, then, should we pray, “Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us” (Psa. 90:17).

Fourth, the beauty of holiness is *satisfying*, and herein it differs radically from the beauty of the things of time and sense. Sooner or later they either pall on one or else leave an aching void. Take the globe-trotter who journeys east and west, north and south, seeking fresh scenes. How soon he tires, discovering that the loveliest landscape cannot supply contentment of mind and peace of heart. Man is more than a material creature, and therefore it requires something else than material things—no matter how beautiful—to meet his needs. It is the things of the Spirit which alone afford satisfaction. “Godliness with contentment is great gain” (1 Tim. 6:6). True, the Christian is never satisfied with his own holiness: rather does he continue to hunger and thirst after righteousness to the end of his wilderness journey. Nevertheless, the holier we are—the closer we walk with God—the more real rest of soul shall we enjoy. And the blessed sequel will demonstrate the contrast still more plainly: instead of discovering that we have only chased the shadows, the Christian has the assurance: “I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with Thy likeness” (Psa. 17:15).

Fifth, the beauty of holiness is *glorifying to God*, and therein it differs radically from much of human beauty. To glorify his Maker is the bounden duty of man, and nothing honours Him so much as our walking in separation from all that is displeasing to Him. But alas, physical charms and spiritual graces are rarely found in the same persons. A notable example of this is seen in the case of Absalom, of whom it is recorded, “In all Israel there was none to be so much praised as Absalom for his beauty: from the sole of his foot even to the crown of his head there was no blemish in him” (2 Sam. 14:25); yet he feared not God and perished in his sins. How many a woman has used her personal attractions to entice men rather than magnify God. How many a well-proportioned and handsome man has employed his gifts for self-

glorification rather than the praise of God. But the beauty of holiness ever redounds to the honour of its Author.

“O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.” This is the only kind of beauty which the Lord cares for in our devotions. “Godliness is to the soul as the light is to the world, to illustrate and adorn it. It is not greatness which sets us off before God, but goodness” (Thomas Watson). Ornate architecture and expensive apparel God delights not in. It is the loveliness of inward purity and outward sanctity that pleases the thrice Holy One. Sincerity of heart, fervour of spirit, reverence of demeanour, the exercise of faith, the outgoings of love, are some of the elements which comprise the “beauty of holiness” in our worship.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *4. Its Renewal.*

In order to bridge the small gap between this article and last month's, we must ponder a very striking passage in Exodus 16, from which we may learn some facts of deep importance concerning the existence and observance of the Holy Sabbath prior to Israel's reaching Sinai. That chapter records God's giving of the manna as Israel's daily food while they were in the wilderness. First, "Behold, I will rain bread from Heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in My Law or no. And it shall come to pass, that on the sixth day they shall prepare that which they bring in; and it shall be twice as much as they gather daily" (vv. 4, 5). From these verses it is unmistakably clear that a Divine *Law* was in existence *before* the Ten Commandments were inscribed on the tables of stone, and from what follows it is equally evident that the observance of the Sabbath was part of this self-same Law: in no other way can these words of God to Moses be explained.

The Lord was about to give His people a daily supply of manna, and made it known to Moses that a double supply should be furnished them on the sixth day—to make up for none being given them on the seventh. In this respect Exodus 16 is parallel with Genesis 2:2, 3, inasmuch as once more we see the Creator condescending to be the Exemplar of His creatures: Jehovah manifested His regard for the Sabbath by withholding manna on that day. "We may here observe three miracles in honour of the Sabbath, and to secure it against desecration were wrought every week before the promulgation of the Law at Sinai. Double the quantity of manna fell on the sixth day. None fell on the Sabbath. The manna preserved for that

day did not corrupt” (Robert Haldane).

Next we are told, “And it came to pass on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread, two omers for one man: and all the rulers of the congregation came and told Moses” (v. 22). Now note very particularly the definite language of Moses in reply, “This is that which the LORD hath said, Tomorrow is the Rest of the Holy Sabbath unto the Lord” (v. 23). This is the *first express mention* of the “Sabbath” in the history of Israel, and the terms in which it is here introduced utterly precludes the absurd idea that the Sabbath was then, for the first time formally and legally instituted. No candid mind reading this chapter for the first time would ever conclude that here was a most important religious ordinance, quite unknown before, now given to the people. Rather is it not obvious to any careful reader that throughout the whole of this narrative two facts (unnamed) were in the mind of the writer, without regard to which the account is unintelligible: that a Divine Law was binding on the people (by which they were to be proved afresh), and that they had a sufficient knowledge thereof as to be expected to keep the Sabbath.

The words of Moses in verse 23 are brought in only incidentally, in answer to a question put to him by the elders: the substance of which is, the people have done quite right in gathering a double supply of manna on the sixth day. Moses was far from speaking in the style of one promulgating a new law, nor do we find him giving any detailed instructions as to the manner in which the seventh day was to be kept. The Wilderness of Sin was far from being the birthplace of this blessed ordinance: these scenes described in Exodus 16 obviously point us back to an earlier and primeval appointment. But ere passing on let us duly note that the words of Moses in verse 23 affirmed the three principal features of the Sabbath: first, it is designed for “rest”; second, it is “holy”—set apart from the six working days; third, it is to be kept “to the Lord”: that is, it is a day for Divine worship and service.

“And it came to pass, that there went out some of the people on the seventh day for to gather, and they found none. And the Lord said unto Moses, How long refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws?” (vv. 27, 28). Here we have illustrated the universal rebellion of the human heart. Here we have exemplified the common tendency to desecrate God's holy day. Even after the most explicit instructions to rest on the seventh day (v. 23), some of the people went out “for to gather.” And mark God's response: “*How long* refuse ye to keep My commandments and My laws.” This was not the first time that Israel had profaned the Sabbath: the words “how long” prove this.

They also confirm what we said above on verse 4: long before Sinai was reached, Israel had God's commandments and laws. Jehovah Himself says so, and the man who denies it, no matter what his standing or reputation, is guilty of the awful sin of making God a liar. “How long refuse ye” looks back to the wicked conduct of Israel while in Egypt.

Finally, observe how verse 29 supplies one more proof that Sabbath observance was no new thing at this time: “See, for that the LORD hath given you the Sabbath, therefore He giveth you on the sixth day the bread of two days; abide ye every man in his place, let no man go out of his place on the seventh day.” Mark the careful distinction in the verbs used here: “the LORD *hath given* you the Sabbath, therefore He *giveth* you on the sixth day the bread of two days.” What excuseless ignorance, then, is betrayed by those who affirm that the Sabbath was first instituted at Sinai. It is either ignorance or willful perversion of the

Scriptures, and charity requires us to conclude that it must surely be the former.

We are now to consider the renewing or reinforcing of the Holy Sabbath at Sinai. “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work. But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the LORD made Heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day, wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it” (Exo. 20:8-11). The Ten Commandments were uttered immediately by the voice of God Himself in the hearing of all the people (Exo. 19), whereas all the other laws (whether ceremonial or judicial) were given through Moses. Those Ten Commandments, and they alone, were twice written by the finger of God on tables of stone, to denote their durability and permanence. The Ten Commandments were put *inside* the sacred ark itself, whereas the other laws (written in a book by Moses) were only placed in its side.

But if God in those ways emphasized the supreme momentousness of the Ten Words, giving them a place superior to all other laws, He also signaled in a peculiar way the outstanding importance and value of the Fourth Commandment. First, it is marked with a particular memento above the other commands: “remember”—partly because of our proneness to neglect, and partly because of its vast importance. Second, it is noticeable that the other nine are expressed simply, either negatively or positively, but this one *both* ways: “keep it holy . . . in it thou shalt not do any work” as if God put particular care to fence it on all sides. Third, its striking position in the Decalogue: it is put at the close of the first table and before the beginning of the second, to signify the observance of both tables depends radically upon our obedience to this particular precept.

It is indeed instructive to observe—O that we may have ears to hear—how the Lord God has fenced this particular commandment with more hedges than any of the other nine, to prevent our violation thereof and to render excuseless any trifling therewith. In addition to what has been pointed out above, we note, fourth, this commandment has more reasons to enforce it than has any of the others. God has therein condescended to give three cogent arguments to press the observance of this law upon us. The first is taken from His own example, which certainly it is both our glory and our duty to imitate in all things in which He has proposed Himself to be our pattern: God rested on the seventh day, and so must we. The second reason is taken from the bountiful portion of time which God has allowed us for the affairs of this life, namely, six-sevenths of our days, and therefore it is but fitting and equitable that the seventh should be devoted to God. Third, from the dedication of the seventh day to God's immediate worship and service: “the Lord blessed the seventh day and hallowed it.”

Let us observe that the character of those reasons wherewith God enforces the Fourth Commandment contain in them a most forcible argument to show that the Sabbath is *perpetually binding*. Negatively, we note there is nothing whatever in those reasons which suggest that the Sabbath ordinance was a ceremonial institution, or that it was to be regarded as being among those things which were typical of Christ to come in the flesh, which things were therefore to be abolished at His coming. Positively, there lies upon us today an obligation just as strong and binding as rested upon the Jews of old, for we equally with them are duty-bound to heed the example which the Creator set His creatures at the beginning. We are clearly required to

own God as the Lord of our time by devoting one seventh thereof to His worship, and we certainly need the blessings attendant on a due observance of the Sabbath as much as ever did the Israelites in Old Testament times.

It is often asserted that Sabbath observance was made binding on the Hebrews only. But this is a most serious error. Not only is the Fourth Commandment of perpetual force, but it is *universally binding*: the arguments made above for the former, apply with equal force to the latter. The tribute which the Fourth Commandment demands for God is unquestionably due Him from all His creatures alike. This Commandment is “holy and just” (Rom. 7:12), and as the Apostle shows in that chapter, is also “good,” for Gentiles as much so as for Jews. We could imagine some reason for saying that the Fifth Commandment has an exclusive Jewish cast, because the promise subjoined to it refers to long life “in the land.” This it might be supposed was something spoken to the Jews alone. But such a supposition is immediately ruled out of court by Ephesians 6:1, 2—note “this IS (not “was”) the first commandment with promise.”

“The ground on which the obligation to keep the Sabbath is based in the Commandment is the most universal in its bearing that could possibly be conceived: 'Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy . . . for in six days the Lord made Heaven and earth.' There is manifestly nothing Jewish here, nothing connected with individual interests or even national history. The grand fact out of which the precept is made to grow is of equal significance to the whole world, and why should not the precept be the same? It seems, indeed, as if God, in the appointment of this law, had taken especial precautions against the attempts which He foresaw would be made to get rid of the institution, and that on this account He based its foundations first in the original framework and constitution of nature” (P. Fairbairn). What spiritual mind can doubt that this was what regulated Him who knew the end from the beginning.

How utterly futile are all these quibblings of men. How baseless their contentions. How strikingly were they anticipated and refuted by the Lord from the start. Why the very terms of the Fourth Commandment itself bring its obligation to bear upon the Gentiles! So far from obedience to this precept being limited to the Jews, it legislated also for “the *stranger* that is within thy gates”! Observe how godly Nehemiah enforced the observance of it upon the Gentiles as well as the Jew: “There dwelt men of *Tyre* also therein, which brought fish, and all manner of ware, and sold on the Sabbath unto the children of Judah and in Jerusalem. Then I contended with the nobles of Judah . . . I commanded that the gate should be shut and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath” (Neh. 13:16-19). It was the observance of it and not the obligation of it which was peculiar to the Jews. It was placed in their custody for the good of all mankind.

The Fourth Commandment *in the Decalogue* was not the original institution of the Sabbath, but rather its formal *renewal* and re-enforcement. As we have shown in previous articles, the actual sanctification and appointment of the Sacred Day of rest in worship takes us back to Eden itself, synchronizing with the very creation of man. It has also been shown that there are quite a number of unmistakable traces of the Sabbath being actually observed by God's people in the very earliest days of human history. But after the family of Jacob settled down in Egypt, they soon learned the ways of the heathen and, to a considerable extent at least, abandoned the instituted worship (Gen. 26:5) of Jehovah. Ezekiel 20:4-8 leaves us in no doubt that it

was because of their idolatry the Lord employed the Egyptians in so severely chastising them.

“And they shall no more offer their sacrifices unto demons, after whom they have gone a-whoring” (Lev. 17:7). The reference here is to Israel's wickedness while sojourning in the land of Pharaoh: as Joshua 24:14 tells us, “Put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood (see vv. 2, 3) and in *Egypt*,” and as Ezekiel 23:3 declares, “They committed whoredom in *Egypt*.” It was pure grace which moved the Lord to deliver His wayward people from the house of bondage, and enter into a covenant with them. But grace ever reigns through righteousness, and never at the expense of the requirements of holiness. Accordingly Jehovah, in a most awe-inspiring manner, renewed His Law at Sinai, and intimated its lasting character by inscribing it on stones by His own finger; in the very center of which He placed the Sabbath statute. God has given us liberty to follow our lawful callings throughout the six working days, and therefore it is but little for us to devote the seventh to Him.

“Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” “Remember”: call to mind its original institution; cherish it in your affections; duly meet its just requirement, “The Sabbath”: the sacred rest: its merciful freedom from temporal toil, its opportunities for obtaining deliverance from bondage of sin, its foreshadowment of the Eternal Rest awaiting those who now walk obediently to the Divine statutes. “To keep it holy”: sever it from common use and consecrate the same to the service of God. It is no less a sin than a sacrilegious stealing of that which is holy to purloin any part of that time which God has consecrated to Himself and to employ in it either sinful or secular activities. How the Sabbath is to be observed, what works are permissible and what are not, will be considered by us (D.V.) in future articles.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1939

### CHRIST FULFILLING THE LAW.

“Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Though we have only just completed a more or less full exposition of the passage in which this verse occurs, we propose to quote some of the comments made thereon by one of the ablest Scottish divines of last century: principally because he treats of it from a different angle than we did, and also because its grand theme is now so little believed. Our present author dealt with its doctrinal import, in relation to the Atonement.—A.W.P.

1. In the fulfillment of the Law and of the Prophets the Lord Jesus must be considered as acting in the capacity of *a surety or substitute*; and the obedience in both lights was, beyond doubt, *vicarious*. Hence His active obedience is for us, and reckoned to our account, not otherwise than if *we* had fulfilled it. The entire obedience of Christ was a compliance with the will of God as expressed in the Law. And His conscious aim in His mission, as He here expresses it, was to fulfil the Law. If, according to the federal agreement, the Law was the special sphere of Christ's earthly work, it is obvious that without a clear conception of the Law, not only in the extent of its claims, but also in the extent of the curse which it entails, we cannot adequately know His obedience in our stead. Hence we must look at the usual threefold division of human duty, in relation to God, to ourselves, and to our fellowmen, if we would adequately apprehend the extent and breadth of this obedience.

With regard to the duties toward God, the whole life of Christ shows that He was animated by supreme

love to God (John 14:31), that a desire to glorify God was His grand aim in all things (John 17:4); and that, from love to His Father, He followed with an undeviating purpose the will of God in all things (John 15:10). He gives expression to this at the threshold of the greatest trial: “But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as the Father gave Me commandment, even so I do. Arise, let us go hence” (John 14:31). The trust which He reposed in the Father, the prayers and the thanksgivings recorded in His history, all suffice to show this.

The second class of duties are those which we owe to ourselves. And these, too, Jesus fulfilled in a perfect purity of conduct, in a self-denial which distinguished Him as the meek and lowly One (Matt. 11:29) and in that marked feature of His character by which He pleased not Himself (Rom. 15:3).

As to the third class of duties, again, those toward our neighbour, and which are summed up in that word which Paul designates the fulfilling of the Law—the Lord Jesus speaks of it when He says, “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13). This He did; and He went about during all His previous life doing good (Acts 10:38). It was in the exercise of this love that He made intercession for His own (John 17:9), and prayed for His enemies (Luke 23:34). And among these duties must be comprehended that obedience to His parents to which there is an early allusion (Luke 2:51), and which shone out so brightly on the Cross, just before the earthly relation toward his mother was dissolved forever (John 19:26).

Thus at every step we can trace the most prompt and undeviating fulfillment of the Divine Law. It was no common obedience, however, which was necessary to constitute the ground of our acceptance, but one which must needs pass through unparalleled difficulties and sorrows, which we can but faintly conceive of, and which must possess a value, on account of the dignity of His Person, such as is nothing short of infinite. The grand commandment laid on Him, and the culmination of His whole obedience, was to die; and hence it was in the spontaneous oblation of His life that the greatness of the obedience was peculiarly displayed.

2. It was one *undivided obedience*; for Scripture knows of only one service or work in which all the elements of submission or obedience meet. It was not a double obedience. The entire life of Jesus must be apprehended as one connected deed. But the obligation was twofold, including the perfect obedience of His life, as well as the suffering of death, or the obedience unto death. The right formula, then, is not “to obey or suffer”; for the claim to a service of love with all the heart still unalterable devolves upon man as man, just as it did in man's primeval state. Not only so: the person who expiates sin must of necessity accept the curse with the utmost alacrity and adoring love, and with a full sense that the infliction of it is to the glory of God. These two elements enter into the Lord's obedience, and neither could be omitted. Hence only a person free from all moral defilement, and therefore not needing to satisfy for personal defects, was in a position to undergo the inconceivable suffering due to sin. What He did concurred with what He suffered, to satisfy the Divine Law, and to place man in the position which he occupied before the Fall or, rather, in a higher relation, because in a primal state and in a state of confirmation.

Had the Church been left to herself without the attacks of error, the two elements of Christ's obedience probably would not have been so much sundered as they have often unduly been. We may distinguish, but

not divide, the parts of that obedience which is one. But the obedience of Christ before His final sufferings, and during them, or, as it has been called, the active and passive obedience, may be vindicated, as two distinct but connected elements, in His propitiatory work. The active obedience belongs to the atonement, and is an essential part of the satisfaction to Divine justice, in the wide and proper acceptation of the word justice. This is a question which has been canvassed long and earnestly; and we rather refer to it in connection with this passage, because the tendency to deny the element of the active obedience is so strong in modern theology. The question is not whether the holiness and active obedience of Christ were necessary to sanctify His sufferings, which no one will call in question, but whether they were available for this alone.

Nor is this the question: whether Christ's passive obedience is the ground of our salvation: without the other. It is *not*, whether Christ's holy obedience was necessary to His Person as a due prerequisite to that atonement which He offered, but, whether Christ, in His entire obedience as well as in His expiatory work, won an unchallengeable title to life for such as are willing to be dependent on Him, and who were unable personally to meet the law's demand—"This do, and thou shalt live." The consequences of denying the active obedience of Christ are these: either God must be supposed to recede from His rights, which would just be tantamount to saying that He denied Himself, or man must be held to procure the title to Heaven by some services of his own, which are imperfect in their nature. Either supposition is inconsistent with the Gospel. If, however, we dismiss scholastic terms, the matter may be put in the following Biblical way, to which no exception can be taken: The law must be kept, and sin must be punished; and Divine wisdom and grace provided a man, that is, a God-man, who was in a position to accomplish both, and did so.

3. Christ's people are thus, through faith in Him, considered as if *they* had always fulfilled the Divine Law. This is the *second* fruit of Christ's satisfaction, as sin-bearing is the *first*. Thus, according to this essential element of Divine truth, the Lord Jesus not only bore sin, but fulfilled all the claims of the Divine Law, and so put His people in possession of a perfect and immaculate righteousness, and secured for them its due reward. For as God could not have ceased to demand punishment at the hands of sinners, from the very perfection of His nature, so He cannot but *confer a reward* from the same rectitude of His nature, when His Law has been fulfilled for them in so complete a way, and by a Person so excellent.

But to all these Biblical views of Divine truth not a few objections have been taken, and some of them of a nature that seem, at first sight, plausible and staggering.

*a.* Thus, it is asked, Was not Christ, as a man, bound, in common with every rational creature, to render obedience to God on His own account? The answer to this is not difficult. A right view of Christ's humiliation will suffice to show that He did not owe obedience on His own account, and that He was not under the Law by any necessity of nature. He owed obedience, not precisely because He took humanity, but because He willed to be made under the Law for us. The Law was not given for the human nature in union with a Divine Person, except as He condescended to be abased, and was made under it voluntarily, as a means to an end. Christ became man for no personal object of His own, but only to be a Mediator for others, and in that capacity to fulfil the Law.

But for this, He would not have come into the world, or have become man, hence the obedience which He

voluntarily discharged was only *for His people*, not for Himself; and Scripture never deduces His active obedience from any natural or inevitable obligation, but always regards it as the end and scope of His mission. Nor can we regard the Lord Jesus as a mere man. He was still the Son of God, neither bound to assume humanity, nor submit to the laws of humanity, nor to encounter any of those numerous temptations by which His obedience was to be exercised. And He did all this spontaneously and vicariously in a humanity which He had assumed, not to be a separate person, but merely as a rational and intelligent instrument or organ, by means of which that great work of vicarious obedience could be accomplished.

*b.* But it is asked again, How can one be righteous, because another was obedient? The answer is obvious. The entire constitution of our race, as contradistinguished from that of other orders of being, was of this nature—that it stood or fell *in a representative*; and Christ is the second man. Men may quarrel with this arrangement and destroy themselves by proud and petulant rebellion, but it will stand, notwithstanding. Believers are treated in Christ as perfectly righteous, and as if *they* had done all that *He* did. The race is saved on the same principle on which it was placed at first: and we who believe are the fulfillers of the Law in the second man, the Lord from Heaven.—George Smeaton.

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May, 1939

### MINISTERIAL THIEVES.

We have often thought it might be interesting and instructive if we were to devote a short series of articles to some of the misunderstood and misinterpreted texts of the Bible. They are not few in number, nor are the mistakes made in their interpretation trivial in importance: there is nothing trivial in the Holy Scriptures, and it is always to our personal loss when we misapply them. Among those verses whose real meaning is often misunderstood is, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber” (John 10:1). Those words have been strangely wrested both by pulpit and pew, and there seems a real need to prayerfully ascertain their significance, for they contain a warning which is a very timely one for these days.

The reference in John 10:1 *is not* to unregenerate souls creeping into the Church of God, still less to their obtaining an entrance to Heaven. It is well-nigh unthinkable that any commentator should take such a view, for “thieves and robbers” never invade the celestial Paradise (Matt. 6:20), nor does Christ lead His sheep out of the Church, as He does from this “fold” (John 10:3). It is not fictitious sheep but *false shepherds* our Lord is here depicting. It is not unregenerate souls attempting to steal salvation, but unregenerate preachers seeking to fleece the flock of Christ who are represented by these “thieves and robbers.” Sheep are quite incapable of “climbing up” high fences, but men who would prey upon them will stop at nothing in their determination to fatten at the expense of their victims.

Here, as everywhere, careful attention must be paid to the setting of our verse. John 10:1 forms part of a

“parable” (v. 6) or proverb. It is manifestly a continuation of the previous chapter, and therefore the false teachers among the Jews (those who had cast out of the Temple the one whose sight Christ had restored—9:35) were primarily intended by the “thieves and robbers.” The priests and scribes demanded of Christ by what authority He acted, seeing that He had received no commission from *them*. Here He turns the tables upon them and insists that *they* had no Divine authority to officiate as the pastors of God's people. In its wider application, the appellation, “thieves and robbers,” refers to all those who invade the pastoral office that are neither called nor equipped by God.

“Verily, verily, I say unto you.” The “you,” then, are the Pharisees of 9:40. “He that entereth not in by the door into the sheepfold”—this “door” must not be confused with that of verse 9: here it is the door into the “sheepfold,” there it is the door of salvation. The “sheepfold” was Judaism, then degenerate; today it is Christendom, now apostate. The “door,” into it denoted the *lawful* means of entrance—a Divine call: being in contrast from “some other way” by which the thieves and robbers gained access. In styling the Pharisees “thieves and robbers,” Christ denounced them as false shepherds with no Divine commission, in sharp antithesis from Himself, who had (by His credentials) evidenced Himself to be the lawful and good Shepherd (John 10:2).

How diligently should they scrutinize their motives who think of entering the ministry, for thousands have abused this Divine institution through love of ease, desire for authority and reputation, or love of money, and brought upon themselves “greater damnation” (James 3:1). Thousands have invaded the pastoral office in an unauthorized manner, to fleece sheep rather than feed them, robbing Christ of His honour and starving His people. Solemn beyond words is it to observe how sternly our Lord denounced these false shepherds of His day. As Bishop J.C. Ryle rightly said, “Nothing seemed so offensive to Christ as a false teacher of religion, a false prophet, or a false shepherd. Nothing ought to be so much feared by the Church, be so plainly rebuked, opposed and exposed”—compare Matthew 23:27, 28, 33.

In conclusion it is pertinent to ask, what are the marks of a true shepherd, how are God's people to *identify* those called and qualified by Him to minister unto His people? We answer, first, the genuine pastor has *the doctrine of Christ on his lips*. The ministers of the new covenant are described as those who had “renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness.” Christendom today is infested with men who are full of guile and hypocrisy, trimming their sails according to whatever direction the breeze of public opinion is blowing. “Nor handling the Word of God deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2). The true servant of Christ holds back nothing that is profitable, no matter how unpalatable it may be unto his hearers. He is one who magnifies not himself, nor his denomination, but *Christ*—His wondrous Person, His atoning blood, His exacting claims.

Second, the genuine pastor has *the Spirit of Christ in his heart*. It is the Spirit who opens to him the mysteries of the Gospel, so that he is a “wise servant” (Matt. 24:45). It is the Spirit of Christ who gives him a love for His sheep, so that it is his greatest delight to lead them into the green pastures of His Word. It is the Spirit of Christ who enables him to use “great plainness (margin “boldness”) of speech” (2 Cor. 3:12), so that he shuns not to declare all the counsel of God. It is the Spirit of Christ who makes him “instant in season, out of season . . . exhorting with all longsuffering” (2 Tim. 4:2). It is the Spirit of Christ who gives efficacy to his ministry, making it fruitful according to the sovereign pleasure of God.

Third, the genuine pastor has *the example of Christ in his life*, which is a conforming of him to the image of his Master. It is true, sadly true, that there is not one of them who does not fall far short both of the inward and outward image of Christ. Yet there *are* some faint tracings of His image visible in all His true servants, or why do God's people love them, respect them, hear them? What other claims have they upon their attention? The image of Christ is seen in their words, spirit, actions—it may be broken, like the image of the sun in ruffled water; but it is *there*, otherwise we have no warrant to receive them as God's servants. Find a man (no easy task today!) who has the doctrine of Christ on his lips, the Spirit of Christ in his heart, and the example of Christ in his life, and you find one of His genuine ministers—all destitute thereof are but “thieves and robbers.”—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *5. Its Pollution.*

The importance and value of the Sabbath is evidenced by the many, varied, and precious objects which, from the dawn of its institution, it was designed to accomplish. Under the Patriarchal dispensation it was a real and powerful witness for the existence of God, His creative power, His sovereignty over His creatures, and their responsibility to Him—truths which lie at the very foundation of all true religion. Under the Mosaic economy the Sabbath not only bore continued testimony to those truths, but also to the providential and moral government of God in the preservation and renewal of the Holy Day and His indisputable title to the worship of His people. It bore testimony to His gracious concern for their temporal and spiritual welfare—it taught them to look, through its hallowed use, for blessings on themselves and their nation—it pointed to a future period of richer blessing and purer worship. Under the Christian era, while all these fundamental truths are still inculcated by the Sabbath, it has become also a memorial of redeeming love, a witness for the establishment of the better covenant, a remembrance of Him who was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification.

It has often been pointed out that the Sabbath is not secured from man's pollution by any natural fences. The winter prevents much labour; obliging employers in many cases to reduce the tasks of their employees. Night is still more obstructive of toil, and consequently, still more conducive to needful repose. In the absence of light, the fields cannot be plowed, the crops harvested, nor homes built; and thus darkness serves to protect the couch of the heavy laden. But the Sabbath has no such bulwarks. It comes

without any cosmic herald of its advent, and all nature fulfils its functions on that day as on any other day. The weather may be so inclement as to present no temptation to engage in outdoor sports; on the other hand, the day may be one of cloudless sunshine, alluring into the wide open spaces. Thus the Sabbath is like a vine when bereft of its hedges, which any boar out of the wood may waste, and any beast of the field devour.

While the institution of the Sabbath is itself a fence to the general interests of religion and a Divine bulwark thrown up to repress the floods of ungodliness, yet the Sacred Day is not secured from profanation by any defenses furnished by the natural world. Thus we may perceive how admirably the Fourth Commandment serves *as a trial* of the attitude of the creature toward his Creator. There are few, if any, of the Divine ordinances that more definitely operate as a moral and religious test of the children of men than the one we are here considering. The conduct of men with reference to the Lord's Day most clearly discovers either their love or their hatred, their loyalty or their rooted enmity to Jehovah, their sovereign Lord. In proportion as nations, churches, or individuals increase in spirituality and morality, they venerate and improve this holy day; and to the degree in which they decline from the love of God and belief of His Truth, they despise and pollute it. The whole of human history forcibly illustrates that fact.

Allusion has been made by us to the natural obstacles which the seasons present to labour, and the protection they are designed to afford the labourer, yet these have been forced to yield to the pressure of greed and the merciless grind of commerce. During winter, at any rate in “civilized” (?) countries like our own, labour is never given a prolonged holiday, but instead its tasks are *varied*. And now the night (still more indispensable to our feeble frames) is disturbed and abridged, till it inadequately suffices for its gracious purpose. As the day comes to a close, artificial light is requisitioned, and in numberless instances the artisan is compelled to work “overtime”—and what compensation for the undermining of his health, and what is far worse, the degrading of his soul, is the extra wages he draws? How far the transportation of the workers and the noise of the “night shifts” interfere with the slumbers of other toilers, it is impossible to estimate—no wonder that institutions for nervous wrecks and mental cases are multiplying.

If, then, the protected seasons of nature have been ruthlessly invaded and trampled upon by graspers after gold, then much more is the unprotected Sabbath exposed to very special and imminent jeopardy. But the very fact that it is so exposed only serves to make more real the *test* it furnishes for the state of our hearts. Private gardens are railed off, and thus are secured from the carelessness and vandalism of the rank and file of the people; but those parks and downs which are open to the general public, furnish a criterion to the manners and conscientiousness of those who use them, or abuse them—as the litter they leave behind bears witness. Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath. The righteous call it “a delight, the holy of the Lord, honourable,” and they honour Him by not “doing their own ways, nor finding their own pleasure, nor speaking their own words” (Isa. 58:13). But the ungodly say, “When will the new moon be gone, that we may sell corn? and the Sabbath, that we may set forth wheat?” (Amos 8:5).

At no one point has the depravity of fallen men been more conspicuously, more blatantly, and more constantly displayed, than by their profanation of the Sabbath. From earliest times they have discovered their awful rebellion against their Creator and Governor by trampling upon His holy institution. As we have pointed out earlier, there is good reason to believe that one of the principal grievances which the Lord

had against the antediluvians was their disregard for and desecration of this primitive ordinance. So, too, with the descendants of Jacob after they settled in Egypt—as the language used by Jehovah in Exodus 16:28 so plainly implies. For centuries past the Hebrews had despised His Law and dishonoured His Sabbaths; and for that very reason His anger waxed hot against them and they were made to suffer His sore judgments (Ezek. 20:8, etc.) And as we shall now see, there was little or no improvement in the later conduct of the Nation as a whole.

After the Lord had acted with such wondrous grace toward His refractory people, and by His mighty power delivered them from the house of bondage, one would have thought their hearts would have been so affected that their subsequent ways were amended. Moreover, the awe-inspiring display which Jehovah gave of His majesty on Sinai and the covenant which He there entered into with the Nation, ought surely to have resulted in a radical change of their behaviour. But alas, neither the goodness nor the severity of God makes any real and lasting impression upon men until they are born again. No matter what mercies they may be the recipients of, no matter how wondrously God deals in providence with them, and no matter how solemnly He makes known to them His sovereignty and holiness, they continue unchanged, unmoved, till they be renewed in their *souls*. Clear and awful proof of this was furnished by them in the Wilderness.

In order to obtain a complete picture of Israel's conduct in the Wilderness, not only must we attend diligently to the historical accounts furnished by the Pentateuch, but we must also search for the additional information supplied by the Prophets, for in many instances their retrospective statements supplement the former. Here, as everywhere, Scripture must be compared with Scripture. It is to Ezekiel that we are again indebted for fuller light on the point now before us. Reviewing the past, the Lord said through him, “I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, among whom they were, in whose sight I made Myself known unto them, in bringing them forth out of the land of Egypt. Wherefore I caused them to go forth out of the land of Egypt, and brought them into the wilderness. And I gave them My statutes, and showed them My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them. Moreover, also *I gave them my Sabbaths*, to be a sign between Me and them, that they might know that I am the LORD that sanctify them” (20:9-12). And what was their response to such grace on His part?

Here is the sad answer to our question, “But the house of Israel rebelled against Me in the wilderness: they walked not in My statutes, and they despised My judgments, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; and *My Sabbaths they greatly polluted*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them in the wilderness, to consume them. But I wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted before the heathen, in whose sight I brought them out. Yet also I lifted up My hand unto them in the wilderness, that I would not bring them into the land which I had given them, flowing with milk and honey, which is the glory of all lands. Because they despised My judgments, and walked not in My statutes, but *polluted My Sabbaths*” (Ezek. 20:13-16). What a tragic picture does that present to us of the generation of Israel which came out of Egypt! How it discovers to us the inveterate wickedness of the human heart. Unaffected by the Divine goodness, they now despised God's statutes and polluted His Sabbaths. And how heavily punished were they for their disobedience? They were excluded from the land of promise and condemned to die in the wilderness. Ah, my reader, God is not to be mocked with impunity; and remember, this Divine judgment of Israel is recorded as a warning for us today.

And what effect did that fearful deprivation have upon their children? Did *they* profit from the warning? Did they turn from the evil ways of their fathers, which had so sorely displeased Jehovah? Surely, surely, with such a solemn judgment before their eyes, they would turn it to good account. Every opportunity to do so was then given to them: “Nevertheless Mine eye spared them from destroying them, neither did I make an end of them in the wilderness. But I said unto their children, in the wilderness, Walk ye not in the statutes of your fathers, neither observe their judgments, nor defile yourselves with their idols: I am the LORD your God: walk in My statutes, and keep My judgments, and do them; and *hallow My Sabbaths*; and they shall be a sign between Me and you, that ye may know that I am the LORD your God” (Ezek. 20:17-20).

Alas, the younger generation were no better than the old: no more amenable to Jehovah's exhortations, no more restrained by fear of His judgments. “Notwithstanding, the children rebelled against Me: they walked not in My statutes, neither kept My judgments, to do them, which if a man do, he shall even live in them; *they polluted My Sabbaths*: then I said, I would pour out My fury upon them, to accomplish My anger against them in the wilderness. Nevertheless, I withdrew Mine hand, and wrought for My name's sake, that it should not be polluted in the sight of the heathen, in whose sight I brought them forth. I lifted up Mine hand unto them also in the wilderness, that I would scatter them among the heathen, and disperse them through the countries; because they had not executed My judgments, but had despised My statutes, and had *polluted My Sabbaths*, and their eyes were after their fathers' idols” (vv. 21-24). It is to be duly noted that in each of these passages the Lord, while making the general complaint that Israel rebelled and walked not in His statutes, specifically singles out for mention the heinous crime that they had “polluted His Sabbath,” for *that* is something which He will by no means tolerate, and fearful indeed are His judgments upon those who are guilty of such a high offense.

Nor was there any improvement after Israel entered and was established in Canaan. To the people of Ezekiel's own day, the Lord complained, “Thou hast despised Mine holy things and, hast *profaned My Sabbaths*” (22:8). The order of those two things is solemn: it is because we despise the things of God that we pollute them. But still worse is what we read of in verse 26 of this chapter: “Her *priests* have violated My Law, and have profaned Mine holy things . . . And have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths.” Not only was the general public guilty of this sin, but the ministers of God were offenders too. They turned a blind eye to the requirements of the Sacred Day, conniving at the joining in of its profanation. Those religious leaders esteemed not those who kept the Sabbath, and winked at those who did servile work therein.

So, too, we find the Lord saying through Jeremiah, “Hear ye the word of the LORD, ye kings of Judah, and all Judah, and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, that enter in by these gates: thus saith the LORD; Take heed to yourselves, and bear no burden on the Sabbath Day, nor bring it in by the gates of Jerusalem; neither carry forth a burden out of your houses on the Sabbath Day, neither do ye any work, but hallow ye the Sabbath Day, as I commanded your fathers” (17:20-22). Note this message was addressed first to the “king's of Judah,” the heads of the Nation, for the heaviest weight of responsibility ever rests on those in the chief places of governmental power; and second, to the people at large. And what was Israel's response to this Divine call? This: “But *they obeyed not*, neither inclined their ear, but made their neck stiff, that they might not hear, nor receive instruction” (v. 23). Alas, what is man? The same in every age, under all circumstances: self-willed, defiant, refusing to be in subjection to his Maker; blind to his own interests,

forsaking his own mercies, deaf to all reproof and admonition.

Patiently and faithfully did the Lord expostulate with His wayward people, setting before them the certain alternatives of their conduct: “And it shall come to pass, if ye diligently hearken unto Me saith the LORD, to bring in no burden through the gates of this city on the Sabbath Day, but hallow the Sabbath Day, to do no work therein; then shall there enter into the gates of this city kings and princes sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, they, and their princes, the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem: and this city shall remain forever. And they shall come from the cities of Judah, and from the places about Jerusalem, and from the land of Benjamin, and from the plain, and from the mountains, and from the south, bringing burnt offerings and sacrifices, and meat offerings and incense, and bringing sacrifices of praise unto the house of the LORD” (vv. 24-26). What inducements were these to render loyal and loving allegiance to their King! The Lord is no Egyptian taskmaster. Not only is His yoke easy and His burden light, but He gives most liberal wages to those who serve Him. True is this for individuals and communities alike. Here is another Scripture which makes it abundantly clear that the chief thing on which *national prosperity turns* is its careful observance of the Sabbath.

If on the one hand Israel would not be moved to obedience by promises of rich reward, perhaps they might be deterred from disobedience by threats of terrible judgment. Accordingly, Jehovah concluded by saying, “But if ye will not hearken unto Me to hallow the Sabbath Day, and not to bear a burden, even entering in at the gates of Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day; then will I kindle *a fire* in the gates thereof, and it shall devour the palaces of Jerusalem, and it shall not be quenched” (v. 27). Alas, Israel was as indifferent to the latter as they had been to the former. How strictly God made good His threat appears from, “came Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem: and he burnt the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem, and every great man's house burnt he *with fire*” (2 Kings 25:8, 9). This was a national calamity in consequence of national pollution of the Sabbath. Following upon the destruction of the Temple and the raising of Jerusalem, the people were carried into Babylon.

Seventy years later, God, in His mercy, opened a way of escape for the people from their captivity, and thousands of their descendants returned to Jerusalem. Had they *at last* learned their lesson? Did they now hearken to the voice of God's rod and mend their ways? No, they were incorrigible. Hardly had they arrived back in the holy land than Nehemiah had to complain, “In those days saw I in Judah some treading winepresses on the Sabbath, and bringing in sheaves, and laden asses; as also wine, grapes, and figs, and all manner of burdens, which they brought into Jerusalem on the Sabbath Day: and I testified against them in the day wherein they sold victuals” (13:15). And then he added, “Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? Yet ye bring *more wrath* upon Israel *by profaning the Sabbath*” (v. 18).

Thus it was all through the long centuries of Israel's history. Nor has the conduct and career of Christendom been any better. While today it is far worse than for generations past. Here, in Great Britain, Sabbath desecration is now almost as rife as it is on the Continent, and only here and there is a feeble voice raised in protest. Sad to say *the heads* of the Nation often set a bad example by travelling on the Sabbath Day. The flood of Sunday newspapers which deluges the land, the irreligious rubbish which is

being broadcast over the air, the increasing number of public places open for sport and entertainment, and the millions of people who turn the Holy Day into one of pleasure and “joyriding” is surely heaping up for us wrath against the Day of wrath unless we, as a people repent and reform.—A.W.P.

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May, 1939

### THE TWO NATURES.

“That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit” (John 3:6); “The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary the one to the other” (Gal. 5:17). These and similar passages clearly connote that there are two distinct and diverse springs of action in the Christian, from which proceed evil and good works. The older expositors were accustomed to speak of these springs of action as “principles”—the principles of evil and holiness. Modern writers more frequently refer to them as “the two natures in the believer.” We have no objection against this form of expression, provided it be used to represent Scriptural realities and not human fancies. But it appears to us that there are not a few today who speak of the “two natures” and yet have no clear conception of what the term signifies, often conveying a faulty idea to the minds of their hearers.

In ordinary parlance “nature” expresses, first, the result of what we have by our origin: and second, the qualities that are developed in us by growth. Thus, we talk of anything bestial or devilish as being contrary to human nature—alas that the beasts so often put us to shame. More distinctly, we speak of a lion's nature (ferocity), a vulture's nature (feeding on carrion), a lamb's nature (gentleness). A “nature,” then, describes what a creature is by birth and disposition. Now the Christian has experienced two births, and is subject to two growths. Two sets of moral qualities belong to him: the one as born of Adam, the other as born of God. But much caution needs to be exercised at this point, lest on the one hand we carnalize our conception of the new birth, or, on the other hand, dwell so much on the two natures that we lose sight of the *person* who possesses them, and thus practically deny his responsibility.

In the interests of clarity we must contemplate these two natures separately, considering first what we are as children of men, and then what we are as children of God. In contemplating what we are as men, we must distinguish sharply between what we are by God's creation, and what we became by our fall from that uprightness in which we were originally made, for fallen human nature is radically different from our primitive condition. But here, too, great care must be taken in defining that difference. Man *did not lose* any component part of his being by the Fall: he still consists of “spirit and soul and body.” No essential element of his constitution was forfeited, none of his faculties were destroyed. Rather was his entire being vitiated and corrupted, stricken with a loathsome disease. A potato is still a potato when frozen; an apple remains an apple when decayed within, though no longer edible. By the Fall man relinquished his honour and glory, lost his holiness, and forfeited the favour of God; but he still retained his *human nature*.

It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that no essential part of man's complex make-up, no faculty of his being, was destroyed at the Fall, for multitudes are seeking to shelter behind a misconception at this very point. They suppose that man lost some vital part of his nature when Adam ate of the forbidden fruit, and that it is *this* loss which accounts for all his failures. Man imagines he is far more to be pitied than blamed. The blame, he supposes, belongs to his first parent, and he is to be pitied because deprived of his capability of working righteousness. It is in such a manner that Satan succeeds in deceiving many of his victims, and it is the bounden duty of the Christian minister to expose such a sophistry and drive the ungodly out of their refuge of lies. The truth is that man today possesses identically the same faculties as those with which Adam was originally created, and his accountability lies in the *use* he makes of those faculties, and his criminality consists in his abuse of the same.

On the other hand, there are not a few who believe that at the Fall man *received a nature* which he did not possess before, and in his efforts to evade his responsibility he throws all the blame of his lawless actions on that evil nature. Equally erroneous and equally vain is such a subterfuge. No material addition was made to man's being at the Fall, any more than that some part was taken from it. That which entered man's being at the Fall was *sin*, and sin has defiled every part of his person—but for *that* we are to be blamed and not pitied. Nor has fallen man become so helplessly the victim of sin that his accountability is cancelled: rather does God hold him responsible to resist and reject every inclination unto evil, and will justly punish him because he fails to do so. Every attempt to negate human responsibility must be steadfastly resisted by us.

The youth differs much from the infant, and the man from the immature youth; nevertheless it is *the same* individual, the same human person, who passes through these stages. Men we are, and shall ever remain: whatever internal change we may be subject to at regeneration, and whatever change awaits the body at resurrection, we shall never lose our essential identity as God created us at the first. Let this be clearly understood and firmly grasped. (To be completed, D.V., in the June issue).—A.W.P.

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### “THE MOTHER OF JESUS.”

The touching incident of our Lord on the Cross, commending His Mother to the care of John, has often been the subject of comment, and always with the object of pointing out His tender filial care for her, and His wish that she should not be left desolate. Doubtless such was His purpose; but was it all, or nearly all? Had this been all, would He be likely to have chosen almost His last moment, and the most public occasion possible, for the fulfillment of a private family duty, besides using a most strange and peculiar form of expression? Surely not. There seems to be a far deeper purpose, which may appear if we trace the Lord's treatment of His earthly parent from the beginning. The first recorded words uttered by the Lord to His mother were a gentle remonstrance: “How is it that ye sought Me? wist ye not that I must be about *My Father's* business?” “*Thy father* and I,” had said Mary. She seemed to have been leaving the Heavenly Father for a moment out of sight, and a reminder was necessary. Though the Child Jesus returned and was “subject unto them,” and 18 quiet years of loving intercourse followed—the first strand of the tie which had united Mother and Son had been parted, and their relation to one another can never have been quite the same as before.

The next recorded conversation was at the marriage at Cana: “Woman, *what have I to do with thee?*” The words sound strangely stern; doubtless they were softened by the tenderest tone and manner, but they were, for all that, a sharp reminder that Mary's maternal authority was now at an end. Another strand was parted, this one at the opening of His public ministry, as the first one was at the opening of His life or Manhood. A little later on His mother and His brethren stood without desiring to speak with Him, seeking

to lay hands on Him, for they said, “He is beside Himself” (Mark 3:21, 31). The Lord's reply was startling, for it placed His mother on an absolute level with the humblest believers, “Who is My mother and who are My brethren?” “Whosoever shall do the will of My *Father* which is in Heaven, the same is My brother and sister and mother” (Matt. 12:48-53)! Another strand was gone! The last mention of Mary in the Gospels is the one with which we started, and which is now seen in a stronger light.

One by one we have seen the ties which bound together Divine Son and human mother severed by His own hand, now the last is touched, and she is His no longer. “Woman, behold thy *son*,” said the dying Saviour. “Then said He unto the disciple, Behold thy *mother*” (John 19:26-27). A remarkable form of expression it seems. *We* should have expected Him to say, “I commend unto thee My mother”; but never once is it recorded that the Lord either addressed Mary or spoke of her as *My mother*, and now as He is about to lay down His earthly life and afterwards assume His resurrection glory, He sets the human relationship aside forever. And Mary, who was wont to ponder things in her heart, seems to have meekly acquiesced, though doubtless this was one of the sharpest thrusts of the sword which pierced through her soul. “From that hour,” apparently an early hour, “that disciple took her unto his own home.” Perhaps she did not see Him die. Certainly her name is not among those present at the empty grave; indeed it is not *recorded* that she ever saw Him in his resurrection body.

Once more does Mary appear in Holy Writ: Acts 1:14, where, she is seen among the little company of humble believers who continued in prayer and supplication, waiting for the promise of the Father; and then we altogether lose sight of her. Each of the occasions on which our Lord repudiated Mary's interference was a *public* one, as if to emphasize and provide ample testimony to His action, and the last was the most public of all, when He finally *relinquished* the filial relationship and transferred it to another man. Preachers have taken much pains to minimize and explain away the apparent distance of our Lord towards Mary—but that it existed there can be no manner of doubt, and we can see the “needs be” of it. The time was coming when the poor humble human instrument of His incarnation would be styled “the Mother of God” and the “Queen of Heaven” and would be accorded idolatrous reverence, and the Lord foreseeing it took strong measures to discountenance such misplaced devotion; and hard as it may have seemed to Mary at the time, she will understand it all, and “magnify the Lord” for it in that day when she shall “awake” with His “likeness” and be “satisfied.”—(A.M. 1902).

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### **FAITHFULNES.**

“It is required in stewards that a man be found *faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). From the preceding verse it is clear that the Apostle was having reference to the ministers of Christ, those whom He has appointed to act as officers in His churches. Other virtues are desirable, but fidelity is imperative. No matter how gifted a man may be, if he is untrue to this trust, he is an offense unto Christ and a stumblingblock to His people. Ministerial faithfulness includes loyalty to his Master, devotion to His interests, steadfast adherence to the preaching of His Word, dispensing the Truth unto those whose souls are committed to Him, not mixing it with speculations, much less substituting false doctrine. A far higher motive than the pleasing of his hearers must actuate and regulate ministerial service.

Those who have been much used of God have ever been men in whom this grace of faithfulness was outstandingly prominent. The father of all who believe is expressly designated “faithful Abraham” (Gal. 3:9). Concerning Moses the Lord testified, “who is faithful in all His house” (Num. 12:7). What a blessed witness is that borne to Daniel: “Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom, but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was *faithful*” (Dan. 6:4). Of himself Paul wrote, “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that He counted me *faithful*, putting me into the ministry” (1 Tim. 1:12). Concerning Timothy he testified, “For this cause have I sent unto you Timotheus, who is my beloved son, and *faithful* in the Lord” (1 Cor. 4:17). What is now being recorded in the Lord's “book of remembrance” of you and me, fellow-minister?

Loyalty to God has always been a costly matter, but individual faithfulness has never involved more personal sacrifice than it does in this day of abounding disloyalty, hypocrisy and compromise. Faithful preaching will render the minister unpopular, and will *empty*, not “fill” churches. It will close doors against him, and if he be without a charge he will find his services are not wanted. It cost Joseph something to be faithful! It did Daniel; it did Paul; and it does every minister of Christ in this degenerate and adulterous age. How necessary it is then for the minister to strengthen his heart by laying hold of those *promises* which are specially given to faithfulness. Here is one of them: “the LORD *preserveth* the faithful” (Psa. 31:23)—from those rocks upon which so many self-seekers make shipwreck.

“He that hath My Word, let him speak My Word *faithfully*” (Jer. 23:28): no matter how unpalatable it may be to the flesh, how much of a weariness to those who wish to have their ears tickled with novelties, or how loud be the outcry against it. “A wicked messenger falleth into mischief; but a faithful ambassador is health” (Prov. 13:17): that is, he maintains his own soul in good health, and exerts a healing influence upon others. “A faithful witness will not lie” (Prov. 14:5): he who maintains a pure conscience before God will not dare to give forth a testimony which he knows to be untrue. Nor will he to obtain the good-will of men represent anything to be other than it is. Consequently, “He that speaketh truth showeth forth righteousness” (Prov. 12:17): that is, by making conscience of veracity and integrity, he makes it clear that he is governed by the principle of righteousness.

How much there is in Scripture to stimulate the minister unto fidelity! “A true (Hebrew, “faithful”) witness *delivereth souls*” (Prov. 14:25), and he is the only one who ever does so. Souls are caught fast in the meshes of Satan's lies, and nothing but the sword of God's Truth can cut them free. However unpopular he may be among men, the faithful witness is approved of and is pleasing *to God*. “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters” (Prov. 25:13). Yes, such are “a sweet savour to God” (2 Cor. 2:15). What holy encouragement is there here for the hearts of the Lord's servants! What rich compensation for the slights and sneers of men!

For there is no faithfulness in their mouths . . . they flatter with their tongues” (Psa. 5:9). *There* is the identifying mark of the “hireling,” the false witness. He aims at pleasing his hearers, making them feel satisfied with themselves, ever patting them on the back. But what are the springs from which integrity and fidelity issue? First, *faith*. It is striking to note that both in the Hebrew and the Greek the same word does duty for both “faith” (the noun) and “faithfulness” (the adjective). Unbelief, then, is the root of unfaithfulness. Second *the fear of God*: “I gave my brother Hanani, and Hananiah the ruler of the palace, charge over Jerusalem: for he was a faithful man, and feared God above many” (Neh. 7:2). There is nothing like the fear of God to deliver us from the fear of men. Third, *love of God*, for where that is warm there must be the desire to please Him at all costs.

But let not the reader suppose that this grace is something restricted to Christ's ministers: not so, God requires it from *all* His people. This is clear from the opening verses of Ephesians, which is distinctly addressed to “the faithful in Christ Jesus.” Much of what has been said above applies with equal force to the rank and file of the saints. They, too, will find that loyalty to God and fidelity to His Word will cost them not a little in the world today, where there is so much pretence, sham, and double dealing. It will result in their receiving the “cold shoulder” even from many of those who profess to be fellow-Christians.

But this must not deter them: “Be thou faithful *unto death*, and I will give thee a crown of life” (Rev. 2:10), is the grand word to lay hold of.

Faithful people have always been in a marked minority. “Help, Lord, for the godly men ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men” (Psa. 12:1), cried David. Note how those two characteristics are conjoined, for piety and honesty are inseparable—compare “good and faithful servant” (Matt. 25:23). So, too, Solomon exclaimed, “Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a *faithful man who can find*” (Prov. 20:6). Why is this? Because it is the part of fallen human nature to take the line of least resistance and choose the path easiest to the flesh. But remember, my reader, whoever you be, “lying lips are abomination to the LORD; but they that deal truly (Hebrew, “faithfully”) are His *delight*” (Prov. 12:22). Here is another of the Divine promises specially addressed to the faithful: “A faithful man shall abound with blessings” (Prov. 28:20): the true way to be happy is to be holy and honest. He who is true to God and man will be blest of Him. O that it may be said of us, “Beloved, thou doest faithfully *whatsoever thou doest* to the brethren, and to strangers” (3 John 5).—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *6. Its Perpetuation.*

We now approach what is to us, upon whom the ends of the ages are come (1 Cor. 10:11), the most pertinent and important aspect of our subject. It is therefore necessary to proceed slowly and enter more into detail, especially as there is so much confusion and error at this point. In seeking to open up this branch of our theme, we feel that we cannot do better than follow more or less closely the lucid and helpful writings of P. Fairbairn thereon. We would like to quote him at length, but this would occupy too much space, so we content ourself by summarizing his able exposition thereof, intermingling and adding some remarks and conclusions of our own.

First, a Christian Sabbath was clearly anticipated by Old Testament prophecy: or to put it another way, the Prophets plainly intimated that the Holy Sabbath would be perpetuated throughout the Christian dispensation. Thus we have a natural bridge which connects the Old and New Testaments together. A wide field is here opened for investigation, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, we shall confine our attention to two predictions: the first one enunciating the basic general principle, the second furnishing more explicit details. We have discussed the former passage under the Covenant articles in our *Studies in the Scriptures*, but for the sake of new readers, and particularly as it bears upon our present theme, we must again look at it.

Before turning to those ancient evangelic testimonies, it should be pointed out that a considerable portion

of the prophetic writings pertains rather to the New, than to the Old Testament dispensation. They were designed to deliver the Jews from dwelling too exclusively in their thoughts on their present regime; on which they were ever prone to settle with a carnal and exclusive regard; and to direct the eye of faith forward to those better things which were to come, and which were to be disclosed in “the dispensation of the fullness of times” (Eph. 1:10). It was of those very things, the prophecies we are to consider, spoke. They were “the testimony of Jesus,” witnessing beforehand of the work He was to do, the nature of that kingdom which He would establish, and the character of those blessings He should confer.

In proof of our contention that the Sabbath obtains for the Christian dispensation, we appeal first to, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the (spiritual) house of Israel, and with the (spiritual) house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which My covenant they break, although I was a husband unto them, saith the LORD. But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel: After those days, saith the LORD, I will put My Law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sins no more” (Jer. 31:31-34). That the new covenant here mentioned is that brought in by Christ is expressly affirmed in the eighth chapter of Hebrews, so that there can be no doubt of this being one of those prophecies which had immediate reference to the Gospel economy.

Now the leading characteristic of this New Covenant, as contradistinguished from that which was made with carnal Israel at Sinai, is that God's Law is now written on the hearts of His people, whereas it was formerly written on tables of stone: in this the Law is transmitted internally, in that, the Nation had it externally. Yet, let it be said emphatically, it is identically *the same Law*: the moral Law, not the ceremonial, for so far from that being exalted into a higher place by Christ, it was in Him abolished, passing away like the shadow when the substance comes. Nor is the ceremonial law ever designated absolutely “the Law of God,” and least of all could that be meant when the Law and the Covenant are viewed (as they are here) as in great measure identical. That which is pre-eminently called “*the Law*” in the Pentateuch and which formed exclusively the old covenant, was simply the Ten Commandments—those wholly and those alone.

It was the Ten Commandments, then, which the Spirit of Prophecy (through Jeremiah) foretold should one day, namely, in the Gospel dispensation—be inscribed by the finger of God upon the hearts of His people. By a miracle of grace being wrought in them, they would, after the inward man, delight in and serve God's Law (Rom. 7:22, 25). It could not be otherwise, for God has predestinated them to be conformed to the image of His Son (Rom. 8:29)—initially so now, fully so in Glory. If then the Head could say, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:8), so in their measure can the members of His mystical Body say the same. Yet there is this great difference—for in all things He has the pre-eminence: Christ was born (“that Holy thing”: Luke 1:35) with God's Law in His heart, whereas it is only written in ours at the new birth.

Now if the Ten Commandments as a whole be written upon the hearts of Christians it must be true of each

individual part—the *Fourth* as well as any of the rest. That Commandment was most certainly included as an essential part of the Law or Covenant which was formerly written without and set before the Nation of Israel, but is now written within and infused with living power in the affections of the souls of God's people. And is not that very fact attested by Christian experience? How uniformly do they who are admitted into the privileges of the New Covenant love and delight in the Day of God! Nay, the more deeply anyone drinks into the spirit of the Gospel and experiences the grace of God writing the Law of holiness on the tablet of his heart, the more invariably does he count the Sabbath “the holy of the Lord and honourable.”

So far from a renewed soul chafing at the restraints which the Day of Rest throws upon his conduct, and hankering after a larger freedom amid the pleasures and business of the world, he gladly hails its hallowed employments, and finds its weekly returns as so many “spring days” in his spiritual nature. He thinks and feels with the poet:

“Sweet day of rest! for thee I'd wait,  
 Emblem and earnest of a state  
 Where saints are fully blest!  
 For thee I'd look, for thee I'd sigh.  
 I'd count the days till thou art nigh  
 Sweet day of sacred rest!”

The second passage to which we appeal for proof of the Sabbath in this dispensation is, “Neither let the son of the stranger that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from His people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, and choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant: Even unto them will I give in Mine house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, everyone that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of My covenant; even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer; their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar: for Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isa. 56:3-7).

Now it should be unmistakably evident to all that the above prediction does and could not refer to Jewish but must relate to *Gospel times*. First, this is clear from the place it occupies in the chain of prophecy, and of which it is a part—i.e., beginning at 54:1 immediately after the atoning death of Christ in chapter 53. Second, it is directly connected with the revelation of “God's righteousness” and the “coming near of His salvation” (56:1), which can only be understood of Gospel times (see Rom. 1:16, 17), and is so regarded by all sound interpreters. Third, express mention is here made of the keeping of the Sabbath as a characteristic mark of godliness on the part of the “strangers” (Isa. 56:6) that is, *the Gentiles* who should join themselves to the Lord—“To the Lord,” and not to the Nation of Israel!

It is also to be noted that the duty and blessedness of observing the Sabbath are spoken of in Isaiah 56:4 as

belonging to the “eunuchs,” who under the Mosaic dispensation were *excluded* from the congregation of the Lord, as also were the “strangers” as a body. Now the calling of the Gentiles and the removal of all outward, personal disabilities in God's sight, are emphatically marks of the New Testament Church; yet of such a Church it was definitely predicted that the observance of *the Sabbath* would form a distinctive characteristic. Finally, not only is the observance of the Sabbath three times repeated with singular emphasis, but it is coupled with laying hold of the Covenant, doing justice, and loving the name of the Lord—clearly importing that the Sabbath has its place with the most important and permanent appointments of God's kingdom.

Ere passing on, perhaps it will be well for us to anticipate an objection which some may be inclined to make against what has just been advanced. The dispensationalists, who are so fond of allocating to a Jewish “millennium” those prophecies which receive their fulfillment under this Christian economy, are likely to say Isaiah 56:3-7 cannot be understood as receiving its accomplishment in Gospel times, but must be regarded as describing conditions under a future and restored Judaism, because verse 7 says, “their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon Mine altar.” From this and other passages the grotesque conclusion is drawn that an era yet to come is to witness a revival of the ancient Levitical ritual—a thing which is not only without a vestige of New Testament support, but which is expressly refuted by the entire contents of the Hebrews' Epistle, the special design of which is to show that the Aaronic priesthood has been forever set aside, superseded by the more excellent priesthood of Christ after the order of Melchizedek.

Surely only those who are blinded by prejudice could fail to see that so far from Isaiah 56:7 containing anything in favour of a future restored Judaism, the whole passage in which that verse occurs makes dead against such a preposterous view. Why, if there be any one thing more than another which outstandingly characterized the exclusiveness of Judaism, it was that the priestly functions were rigidly confined *to the family of Aaron*. “Therefore thou (Aaron) and thy sons with thee shall keep your priest's office for everything of the altar, and within the veil; and ye shall serve: I have given your priest's office unto *you* as a service of gift: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death” (Num. 18:7 and cf. 3:10, 38). In passage after passage “death” is threatened the “stranger” (Gentile) who dared to approach that altar. So strict was Jehovah in the enforcement of this restrictive statute, that even when one of Israel's own kings dared to usurp sacerdotal functions by burning incense upon the altar, He smote him with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-20)!

What shall be thought, then, of those “renowned Bible teachers,” who are supposed to have so much more light than the rank and file of ministers, when they display such ignorance of one of the most elementary principles of Judaism, and give forth such a carnal and absurd interpretation of the prophetic Scriptures? Why, to put it as charitably and mildly as possible, that they are unsafe guides in spiritual things, and that though they may be able to amuse the curious, they cannot edify those seeking a closer walk with God. This childish and slavish “literalism” is so far from honouring God, that it brings His Holy Word into disrepute among sober-minded people. Anyone who possesses spiritual discernment and who is at all acquainted with the New Testament, should at once perceive that the “burnt offerings” of Isaiah 56:7 are the same, as the “*spiritual* sacrifices” of 1 Peter 2:5, expressed in the terminology of the Old Covenant.

What a blessed picture does Isaiah 56 furnish of the distinctive and special blessings of Gospel times! New Covenant privileges are portrayed under the figures of Old Covenant institutions, yet such remarkable contrasts are drawn that there is no excuse for mistaking their purport. Both eunuchs and strangers were expressly excluded from the sacred precincts of Israel's tabernacle and temple, and to here affirm that the Lord would give them a "place in His house," is only the Old Testament way of saying that the "middle wall of partition" would be broken down." When in verse 6 it says, "the sons of the stranger that join themselves to the LORD, to serve Him," the same Hebrew word is used as signifies the service *of the altar*: in other words, it was a prophetic announcement that the redeemed from the Gentiles were made "a royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9) to offer no material and outward sacrifices, but spiritual and inward ones, the holy exercises of renewed hearts. The wild idea that it is "millennial" blessings which are here portrayed, is conclusively discountenanced by, "I will give them an everlasting name" (Isa. 56:5).

But to proceed: that the Sabbath should be continued throughout our own dispensation is just what might be expected, for the merciful nature and tendencies of the weekly Day of Rest is in perfect accord with the character and genius of Christianity. If a day of stated rest, on which all labour was forbidden as unlawful, and nothing permitted save what ministered to the life and well-being of the soul (with the exception only of works of necessity and mercy), was appointed by God for the good of His creatures under the Old Covenant, then certainly such a gracious provision is equally suited to the character and design of the New Covenant. If there be any feature of Christianity in its connection with human society, more prominent than another, it is the tenderness it breathes toward the poor and needy, and the beneficent influence it is fitted to exert on the conditions of those who require most of sympathy and kindness.

Christ Himself gave it as the leading characteristic of His work on earth that thereby the objects of deepest compassion were relieved, and that the poor had the Gospel preached unto them (Matt. 11:4, 5). There was in His heart an infinite tenderness and fellow-feeling for such, even in regard to temporal evils, which often excited the wonder of His immediate followers and rebuked their comparative indifference. And is not a weekly Sabbath, bringing a periodical release from the toils and burdens of life, permitting the most weary and oppressed a season of repose in the bosom of their families, and to attend to what they must otherwise neglect, namely, the higher interests of their being—is not *such* a Day an unspeakable boon to the great bulk of mankind? Has not the Sabbath been one of the most wise and benevolent gifts the Creator has bestowed upon His creatures, testifying His care both for their bodies and their spirits, by providing relaxation for the one and refreshment for the other?

Undoubtedly that is the real character of the Sabbath. And if Christianity has done anything to destroy the foundations on which such a blessed institution rests, it must surely in this particular, be strangely inconsistent with its general tendency and design. In its care for the poor and oppressed—it must then actually rank lower than Judaism, and be chargeable with removing one of the noblest bulwarks of the weak against the strong—of the labouring classes of society against the greed and grind of the monopolists. That the Gospel of the grace of God was intended to produce such an unfavourable effect, or can be made to do so otherwise than by some gross perversion of its meaning, will not readily be believed by any who know what the spirit of the Gospel is. The benevolent character of the Gospel, viewed in connection with the equally benevolent character of the Sabbath, amounts to a strong presumption that so far from subverting, the one must rather establish and support the other.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1939

### THE TWO NATURES

*(Continued from the May issue)*

At the outset: we are the same persons all through. Neither the deprivation of spiritual life at the Fall, nor the communication of spiritual life at the new birth, affects the reality of our being in possession of what we commonly call human nature. By the Fall we did not become less than men; by regeneration we do not become more than men. That which essentially constitutes our manhood was not lost, and no matter whatever be imparted to us at regeneration, our individuality is never changed.

If the above distinctions be carefully borne in mind, particularly between what our nature essentially consists of and what it “accidentally” became by virtue of the changes passing upon it, then there should be less difficulty in our understanding what is signified by the Lord's assuming *our nature*. When the Son of God became incarnate, He took to Himself human nature. He was in every respect true Man, possessing spirit and soul and body: “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17). This does not explain the miracle and mystery of the Divine incarnation, for that is incomprehensible; but it states the fundamental fact of it. Christ did not inherit our corruption, for that was not an essential of manhood. He was born and ever remained immaculately pure and holy; nevertheless, He took upon Him our nature intrinsically considered.

Reverting for a moment to our opening passage: “that which is born of the flesh is flesh.” Here “the flesh”

is the name given to human nature as fallen—it must not be restricted to the body (as in a few passages it is), but understood (as generally in the New Testament) of the entire human constitution. In affirming, “that which is born of the flesh is flesh,” Christ reiterated the basic and unchanging principle—repeated no less than nine times in Genesis 1—that every creature brings forth “after his kind.” The quality of the fruit is determined by the nature of the tree that bears it: an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. Man's fallen nature cannot yield that which is sinless. No matter how much fallen man may be educated, civilized, or religionized, in his natural state he cannot produce that which is acceptable to the thrice holy God. In order to that he must be born again—a new and sinless nature imparted to him.

“But that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” A new, a spiritual life is communicated, from which the grand moral change in its subject proceeds. This communication of Divine life to the soul is viewed in the New Testament under various figures. It is likened to the implanting of an incorruptible “seed” in the soul (1 Peter 1:23; 1 John 3:9); to a cleansing of the heart, a “washing of water by the Word” (Titus 3:5; Eph. 5:26); to a renovation of the will, or a writing of God's Law in the mind (Heb. 8:10). The figure of the “seed” conveys the idea of a subsequent growth; the washing of water suggests a process of cleansing only commenced; while that of God's writing His Law in our minds intimates the durability and permanence of His work of grace. It is from this new life or nature, imparted by the Spirit, that all spiritual life proceeds.

We have no desire to belittle the marvel and miracle of the new birth: so far from it, we freely accept our Lord's declaration that it is a mystery beyond man's power to solve (John 3:8). If the communication of natural life be an enigma to human understanding, much more so is the impartation of spiritual life. Thus, in our efforts to simplify one aspect of regeneration we seek to guard against falsifying it at another. What we wish to make clear is, that at the new birth no new faculties are added to man's soul, no addition is made to his essential threefold constitution. Previously, he possessed a spirit and soul and body; he does not now have a fourth thing bestowed upon him. It is the man himself who is born again. As at the Fall his person was vitiated, now his person is regenerated—the full effects of which will only appear at his glorification.

Having thus considered, very briefly, the two natures in the Christian, we must now distinguish sharply between them and the individual in whom they reside. A *nature* and a *person* are in many respects widely different. Whether unconverted or converted, the person is constitutionally the same: it is the one who was dead in trespasses and sins who has been Divinely quickened. It is identically the same individual who formerly was a child of disobedience, under condemnation, who is now justified and sanctified. And, my reader, it is to the *person* and not to his nature that accountability attaches. Deeds belong to the individual and not to his nature. No amount of quibbling can gainsay the fact that in his heart even the unregenerate is conscious that he is responsible to act and live contrary to his fallen nature, and that he is justly culpable if he yields to his depraved inclinations. It is on this very ground that God will judge him in the Day to come, and so self-evidently righteous will this be that “every mouth will be stopped” (Rom. 3:20) and God “will be clear when He judges” (Psa. 51:4).

Plain and simple though it be, yet we feel we must labour the point a little further. How many professing Christians today speak of “the flesh,” in themselves and in others, in such a way as if its being an exhibition of the flesh thoroughly explained matters. Were one to rebuke another for conduct unbecoming

a child of God, and he replied, Yes, that is the flesh working in me, such language would plainly evidence an attempt *to escape* responsibility. If evil deeds by a Christian were excusable on the ground that the flesh still remains within him, then by parity of reason every sinner on earth could excuse himself, and how then could God judge the world? In point of fact the unregenerate do, everywhere, fall back on their sinful nature to escape condemnation, whereas if they listened to conscience they would certainly know that their nature never compelled them to commit a single sin. It inclined them, but they were responsible to control and resist it, and the essence of their guilt is that they did not.

It is *the man*, then, who sins, and is the sinner; it is the man who needs to be forgiven and justified; it is the man who is responsible to walk not in the flesh but in the Spirit. It is the same person all through. It is the man who is born again, and not a nature. True, at the new birth he receives a new life or nature, so that he now has two natures, and his responsibility is to mortify the old and feed, strengthen, and be governed by the new. The flesh is in no wise improved by the presence of the “spirit,” any more than weeds are bettered by planting flowers in their midst. The flesh and the spirit are contrary to each other, and my responsibility lies in making no provision for the former, acting according to the dictates of the latter.—A.W.P.

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### 1 Peter 2:25

“For ye were as sheep going astray, are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls” (1 Peter 2:25). How distinctly this shows that those sinners who trust in the Lord Jesus for salvation were already His sheep, when as yet they had not been brought to know their need of the great salvation accomplished for them by their “Good Shepherd.” “Ye are now returned unto the Shepherd”: how distinctly this shows the sure results of *grace*, through the quickening work of the Holy Spirit. As the result of that work, the Lord Jesus possesses the chief attraction for them. “My sheep hear My voice. . .and they follow Me.” They now seek no other place of refuge, no other Guide but Himself. They may possess but little comfort. They have but a very faint assurance of their interest in His love. Great may be the depths of inbred evil over which they have to mourn; yet withal they can truly say that their eyes are toward Him and the desire of their hearts is after Him. The sure evidence this, that His eyes were previously towards them, and His desire first after them, and that His voice has effectually called them to Himself.

“Them also I *must* bring, and they *shall* hear My voice.” How emphatic! How certain is the Shepherd's language! How complete are the arrangements of the Everlasting Covenant! How irresistible are the workings of sovereign electing grace! So is it always. He begins the work in the soul of His beloved; and it is He who carries on that work unto the end. Both the beginning and the end shall evermore be to the glory of His matchless, free, and unmerited grace.—Thomas Moore.

There are two points in the above quotation, most blessed and important, yet little understood today, which perhaps call for a brief amplification. First, the fact that those who savingly believe in Christ are His “sheep” before ever they turn unto Him, for it is to be duly noted that 1 Peter 2:25 is not treating of the recovery of backslidden Christians, but of their first coming to the Saviour. As our Lord so plainly declared, “Other sheep I have (not “shall have”) . . . them also I must bring” (John 10:16). They belonged to Him from all eternity. They were His by the Father's election and by His gift of them to His Son. But, it may be objected, these sheep are said to “return” to Christ, so they must previously have been in the fold. The answer is simple: Christ's sheep *went astray* from Him when they fell in Adam, their natural head, and consequently they were born in sin.

Second, the voice of the verb. It is not “ye *have* returned unto the Shepherd,” but “*are* now returned.” This denotes they were completely *passive* therein. The work of regeneration is entirely Divine, and nothing of man enters into it. It is wrought in us, and not done by us. The active follows the passive, as the results of life follow the bestowment of life. Our coming to Christ is the consequence of His having drawn us. It is a sovereign act of Divine power which brings us from death unto life, in which we are completely passive.—A.W.P.

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### **BIBLE STUDY.**

From our correspondence we gather that in these strenuous days, there are not a few who deplore the fact that they do not now have the time available for serious reading which they once had. Working conditions are so exacting, competition is so keen and ruthless, the pace has become so feverish, that the majority are too exhausted at the close of the day to apply themselves in the evening to anything which involves much effort. We sympathize with these weary toilers, and would offer to them the following remarks. First, God is no Egyptian taskmaster, laying upon us a burden grievous to be borne. Second, there is nothing more restful to the nerves and relief-bringing to an over-taxed mind than half an hour spent alone with God; say five minutes in reading a Psalm or a portion from the Gospels, 15 or 20 minutes at the Throne of Grace—thanking God for the mercies of the day, pouring out to Him our troubles, seeking fresh supplies of grace: and then reading a chapter from the Epistles. Third, retire to rest half an hour sooner than you have been doing, and rise that much earlier in the morning, so as to spend it with God, preparing yourself for the demands of the day. Fourth, be most particular in seeing to it that you spend several hours on the Sabbath over God's Word and reading edifying books. It is not honouring to the Lord for you to rush from one meeting to another and leave yourself little opportunity for private devotions.

But there is another class of young people or those not so hardly pressed by the exigencies of modern life, who write and ask us what we consider to be “the best way to study the Bible.” Recently it has struck us that the term “study” in this relation has an egotistical sound and savours of carnality. Is it not almost irreverent to employ this language here—a dragging down of the holy and unique Word of God to the

level of mere human productions? Is it a clear brain or a sensitive conscience which is most essential for profiting from Divine revelation? and which is more likely to be called into exercise by close “study”? “What method do you recommend for studying the Bible?” Does not such a question seem to indicate that the inquirer supposes the Sacred Scriptures to be addressed chiefly to the intellect? The questioner may not be conscious of this (for the heart is very deceitful), yet is not that what is really implied? Can you imagine one who had received a missive from his sweetheart proposing to sit down and “study” it? Would not that expression be altogether incongruous in such a connection?

But has not God Himself exhorted us to “study” His Word? Where? In what passage? The actual term “study” occurs but five times in the Bible. Twice in Proverbs (15:28; 24:2) where it signifies to “meditate” beforehand; once in Ecclesiastes 12:12; again in 1 Thessalonians 4:11—“Study to be quiet”; and finally, “study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of Truth” (2 Tim. 2:15), which is addressed to the preacher, and means he is to make it his paramount concern to endeavour to please God in all things, and is to spare no pains in equipping himself to minister the Word in season to needy souls, so that each may receive a suitable portion. Neither the verse itself nor the context has any reference to partitioning off the Scriptures, allotting one book to this dispensation and another book to that dispensation—which is a subtle device of the Enemy to rob God's children of many needed parts of their spiritual bread.

Are we intimating, then, that the rank and file of God's people should devote less time to the Scriptures, or that they should be encouraged to scan them superficially? No, indeed—God forbid! That against which we are here protesting is the God-dishonouring idea that His Word is merely a piece of literature, which may be “mastered” by a course of “study.” That which we would warn against is an undue occupation with the technical aspects of the Bible. By all means read and re-read the whole Bible through consecutively, so as to become acquainted with its contents. By all means, “search the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11) in order to test all you hear and read—“compare” one part with another, so that you may obtain fuller light upon what is before you. Pray constantly for the guidance and illumination of the Spirit, that He may open to you its Divine mysteries; slowly ponder each word in every verse. Above all, beg God to write His Word more legibly and fully upon the tablets of your heart.

God's blessed Word is not for dissection by the knife of cold intellectuality, but is to be laid to heart. It is not given for us to display our cleverness and “brilliance” upon, but to be bowed before in true humility. It is not designed for mental entertainment, but for the regulation of our daily lives. Far, far more important than “method” is our *motive* when approaching the Word. Not to acquire that which will puff us up in our own conceits, but that which will subdue pride and bring us as supplicants to the footstool of Mercy, is what we should seek. Of what value is a knowledge of the original Hebrew and Greek, or a thorough acquaintance with the history, geography, and chronology of the Bible, if the heart be left cold and hard toward its Author? We very much doubt then, if this word “study” is an appropriate one to apply unto our perusal of the inspired page. What would be thought of a child, away from home, saying he was going to “study” the letters he had received from his parents? And the Bible consists of a series of letters from the Heavenly Father to His dear children. Then let us cherish them as such, and act accordingly.

As we wrote recently to two young friends in the U.S.A.: “I wonder if you will be surprised when I say

that, I seriously doubt if God has called or requires *you* to 'study' His Word—what you need to do is FEED thereon. How much nourishment would your body derive from a study of the chemical properties of cereals and fruits, or from seeking to ascertain the various sorts of soil in which they are grown or the different types from which they are derived, or the meaning of their Latin names? None whatever. And I am persuaded that much of the modern 'study of the Bible' is equally profitless spiritually. True, such a study as I have mentioned above, would feed pride—acquiring a knowledge which many of your fellows possess not; but would it aid digestion?

Would it not be more practicable to pay closer attention to securing a nutritious and *balanced* diet? Would it not be more profitable if you gave greater attention to the mastication of your food? So it is, dear friends, with our spiritual food.” “Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). That is the only nutritive food for the soul! Dwell not so exclusively upon favourite books of Scripture that you neglect others equally needful, but vary your reading, and then you will obtain a balanced diet. Memorize a verse or two every day and meditate thereon whenever you have a few spare moments, even when journeying to and from your work, and then you will masticate your Food. Put the precepts into practice, heed the warnings of Scripture, and then you will assimilate what you have fed upon.—A.W.P.

N.B.—It should hardly be necessary for us to point out that this brief editorial is not designed for preachers and teachers.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *6. Its Perpetuation.*

Continuing at the point where we left off last month, let the reader ponder carefully the following questions. Does a weekly return of a day, separated from ordinary employment and consecrated to the immediate service and worship of God, seem to run contrary to the evident scope and tendency of the Gospel, or rather to harmonize with it? Does it tend to promote or hinder the end which Christianity has avowedly in view? Is it relished or disrelished by those who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of the Gospel? And when it is allowed, more or less, from whatever cause, to fall into neglect, does the cause of Christ appear to gain or to lose in consequence? These are very important and most pertinent inquiries, and are not to be summarily dismissed by a prejudiced shrug or sneer.

It is neither fair nor fitting that such questions as the above should be disposed of by a general and unsupported objection that such an ordinance as the Sabbath is not in keeping with the spirit of the Gospel. We ask, in what respect is it not in accord? Does it beget a temper which the lessons of the Gospel are meant to subdue, or to check the growth of feelings which it calls us to cherish and manifest? If this *were* the case, it would go far to prove the unsoundness of any defense which might rather be raised for the Sabbath in this dispensation. But is it so? Wherein lies the supposed contrariety between the design and spirit of Christianity and the strict observance of a weekly Sabbath? To reply that the one promotes freedom while the other makes for bondage, is to confound liberty and license and is to mistake necessary restraint for serfdom.

It is almost universally acknowledged in Christendom that the Gospel, considered in its lowest aspect, is pre-eminently a scheme of benevolence, and that it looks with a kindly and friendly countenance on the condition of those who most stand in need of sympathy and care. But we ask, is not a weekly Sabbath, withdrawn from worldly employments, bringing to the very busiest the liberty, at least, of relaxing their bodies and refreshing their spirits, one of the highest boons that can possibly be conferred on the poor? Certainly God Himself claimed it as one of His special acts of kindness toward Israel that He gave to them the privilege of knowing and keeping such a day. Are, then, the artisans of this materialistic, strenuous, and avaricious age, in less need of such a merciful furlough from their weekly toil? Then has the Gospel less concern for man's temporal well-being than had the Law?

But the Gospel has another, a higher, a far more prominent and peculiar characteristic than this, namely, its *spiritual* and *holy* tendency being pre-eminently designed to beget those who embrace it to a pure and heavenly life. In this respect it not only equals, but far surpasses Judaism. True it is, blessedly true, that the Gospel is not so much a revelation of law as of grace, nevertheless grace abounds only that believers may proceed to higher exercises of faith and godliness. Every doctrine it reveals, every privilege it confers, is avowedly designed to have its present fruit unto holiness, as well as its final end unto everlasting life. To be conformed unto the pure image of the Son of God, to have our affections set upon things above and not on things of the earth, to glorify God and not gratify self is the character at which the Gospel aims—which all its truths and ordinances are calculated to produce, and without which its great end is practically annulled. Hence the covetous, the lovers of pleasure, the earthly-minded, no less than the grossly impure, are expressly declared to be unfit for a place in the kingdom of God as now constituted.

Now as real Christianity is thus identified with a spiritual and heavenly character on the part of its professors, it is pertinent to ask, What relation has the institution of a weekly Sabbath, dedicated throughout to the worship and service of God, to such an object? Does it tend to promote, or rather to hinder and retard, this high design? The question is not whether men may not strictly adhere to the observance of a proper Sabbath, and yet resort to unhallowed practices on other days of the week, for hypocrisy can counterfeit a regard to this as to any other ordinance of God. No, it is, Is the Sabbath calculated to be a handmaid to the Gospel in producing the purifying effects at which it aims? Does a weekly returning day, divorced from all ordinary labour and devoted to religious exercises, tend to help forward true piety, or to mar and kill so desirable a fruit.

The question when thus directed to its proper object, admits of a speedy answer: not only is a day of holy rest greatly conducive to the end in view, but it is scarcely possible to conceive how, without such a day, the end could, among the bulk of mankind, be accomplished at all. Even under the Mosaic economy, when the standard of spirituality was confessedly lower than it ought to be now, the Sabbath was found necessary for the same purpose, and on this account especially did God set it to be “a sign between Him and His people throughout their generations, that they might know that He was the Lord that sanctified them.” How much more, then, is it required now, when His people are called to live so much by the faith of what is spiritual and Divine, and to cultivate that elevated frame of mind and course of life which is indispensable to a close communion with God.

While it is true that the Gospel requires this heavenly mindedness and holy living to be common to every day of the week, and does not allow it to be confined only to one, yet take away the wholesome and hallowing influences of that one, constantly coming round with its sacred exercises, and what is likely to become of the rest? How soon will the bulwarks of piety give way, and the whole spirit and character of Christianity become secularized, if the Sabbath were practically abolished and every day of the week were alike devoted to worldly pastime or business. If the cause of Christ on earth is to prosper, and the great end of the Gospel to be promoted in the souls of men, then assuredly this day of holy rest to the Lord cannot be dispensed with, nor can it be too jealously guarded against the encroachments of worldly occupation, for it is through the sacred leisure and holy exercises of that day men are especially to familiarize themselves with the things of God.

Another way of ascertaining the relation which the Sabbath holds to practical Christianity is to inquire how they who have drunk most deeply into the spirit of the Gospel usually feel toward such a day. If we might entertain any doubt as to the proper connection between a Sabbath and the great ends of the dispensation of grace, we ought surely to have that doubt removed, if we find the general pulse of the saints beating, as it were, in unison on the subject. We would seldom fail to gather aright the bearing of any particular measure on the constitution of a country, if we heard one and the same sentiment expressed regarding it by those who were most conversant about and imbued with the spirit of that constitution. So with the Sabbath. Can any such testimony be produced in its favour? Yes—in every generation of this era, the most pious have espoused and promoted its observance, and that not only in one country, but in every land where the Gospel obtains a footing. Pages might be filled with testimonies from one and another, but we will content ourselves with one only, who lived in the palmy days of Puritanism.

“For my part, I must not only say, but plead whilst I live in this world, and leave this testimony to the present and future ages, that if ever I have seen anything in the ways and worship of God, wherein the power of godliness hath been expressed: anything that hath represented the holiness of the Gospel, and the Author of it; anything that hath looked like it prelude to the everlasting Sabbath and rest with God, which we all through grace to come unto, it hath been there and with them where and amongst whom the Lord's Day hath been had in highest esteem, and a strict observation of it attended unto, as an ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ. The remembrance of their ministry, their walking and conversation, their faith and love, who in this nation have most zealously pleaded for, and have been in their persons, families, and churches, the most rigid observers of this day, will be precious with them that fear the Lord, whilst the sun and moon endure” (John Owen).

We bring these arguments to a close by pointing out that it adds much to the force and conclusiveness of all that has been advanced above for the necessity of a Sabbath to the life and prosperity of Christianity, that whenever the observance of such a day falls into practical neglect the consequence to the cause of Christ are most disastrous. Ministers of the Gospel, and teachers and guardians of youth have often proclaimed the melancholy result of what they have witnessed in many lands, that neglected or ill-spent Sabbaths infallibly carry in their train declining spirituality and decreasing morality. Chaplains of prisons have in like manner borne witness that the vast majority of offenders brought under their notice have been notorious Sabbath-breakers, and that many of them acknowledge their downward course began with neglecting its holy duties and privileges.

Thus far have we sought to show that the presumption in favour of the Sabbath being perpetuated during this Christian era amounts virtually to a demonstration. We now proceed to prove this presumption grows into *certainty* when we contemplate the personal conduct of the Lord Jesus Christ in connection with it, and ponder some of His declarations. Take first the former: “And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and, as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day” (Luke 4:16). Thus it is clear that the Saviour honoured this Divine institution. During the quiet years which preceded His public ministry, He had regularly attended the synagogue's services on that day specially set apart for sacred solemnities. It is striking to note that this statement occurs not in Matthew (the most Jewish of the Synoptists), but in Luke, where He is portrayed as the Son of man.

At the beginning of His public ministry, one of Christ's first announcements was, “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17). Here the Lord asserted in most unequivocal language, that His mission in this world was not designed in any respect to abolish or relax, but to verify and confirm what had previously been declared by God. The Redeemer accomplished what was required by the Law and the Prophets, first, by personally fulfilling in Himself that righteousness which they demanded; and second, by imposing the same upon His people as the measure of that obedience to which through His grace they were to be ever growing. To have ignored the demands of the Law or the Prophets in either of those respects, would manifestly have been to destroy and not to fulfil them.

Now the force of Christ's solemn assertion in Matthew 5:17 and its pertinence to our present inquiry is at once apparent if we pause to ask this specific question: was the ordinance of the Sabbath equally recognized and enforced in the Law and the Prophets? Surely the question answers itself. In that solemn and comprehensive revelation of Law which was promulgated from Mount Sinai and which in Scripture is usually denominated “*the Law*,” it had a definite, an honourable place, occupying the very center of the Ten Commandments. So, too, in the Prophets: not only when they spoke of Jewish, but also when they referred to Gentile times, there is (as we have shown) a testimony both explicit and authoritative in favour of the Sabbath. Thus, when Christ declared He came to fulfil the Law and the Prophets, He can only be fairly understood to mean that He definitely adopted the testimony they delivered concerning the day of Sacred Rest.

“And He said unto them, The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:27, 28). The Sabbath was designed for man's blessing. It was given because he needed it, both in his body and in his soul. It was appointed that he might be *man* in the highest sense of the word—something better than a beast of burden, something nobler than a cash register. Observe the force of, “*Therefore* the Son of man is Lord *also* of the Sabbath”: because the Sabbath is made not merely for Israel, but for man, and because in becoming incarnate the Son of God touched all humanity, as “Son of man” He is “Lord also of the Sabbath.” And mark well His relation thereto: He is not the Destroyer of the Sabbath, but its “Lord”; not the Repealer of it, but its Sovereign.

There are a number of passages in the Gospels (like Matt. 12:1, 2, 10) which record the criticisms that the Saviour met with from His enemies regarding His conduct on the Sabbath, and it is most instructive and important to note the different answers He gave in self-vindication. That which is of chief moment for us

to observe is that His utterances on these occasions made it unmistakably clear that both works of real necessity and works of mercy on the Sacred day are permissible and lawful. Thus we discover that the words, “in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exo. 20:10) are *not* to be understood *absolutely*, but are to be interpreted in the light of these modifications of Christ. All Sabbath labour which is not imperative for the well-being of man and beast is Divinely forbidden, but whatever be essential for their true good is sanctioned by the Lord's own example.

Though Christ ignored all the rabbinical regulations which had been superimposed upon the Divine Law, He never did one thing or uttered one word which to the slightest degree undermined or relaxed the requirements of the Fourth Commandment. There is evidence that the Sabbath law had been encumbered and perverted by Jewish interpretations and traditions. They permitted a man to fill a trough with water for beasts to come and drink, but forbade him carrying water to them. According to one school it was not allowable to minister unto the sick on the Sabbath. Consequently we find our Lord going to considerable pains to expound the Fourth Commandment, and rescue it from these accretions. It was *not* that Christ modified the exactions of the Divine Law or granted man an indulgence for secularizing the Sacred Day, but that He freed it from the arbitrary injunctions of the Jewish teachers.

In what has just been pointed out, we discover another proof for the continuance of the Sabbath in this dispensation. If the Sabbath had been on the brink of being repealed, why should Christ have been so careful to explain its requirements, and make clear that works of mercy and of necessity were allowable on that day? Read carefully the various vindications which He gave them when attacked on that point, and where is there the slightest hint that He was about to abrogate the Sabbath? So far from it, His defenses, one and all, were simply to the effect that He was delivering it from the errors of the Pharisees, and thereby He settled a point which would afterwards be of great service to His Church. “Suppose you saw a man taking pains to restore a defaced inscription on a pillar, to remove from it the rubbish which had been heaped around its base, and to tear away the ivy that surrounded its summit, would you not infer it was his intention that its inscription should remain for the information of future ages? Such was the conduct of our Lord in reference to the Sabbath Law” (“The Sabbath Not a Mere Judaical appointment” by Andrew Thomsom).

“But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day” (Matt. 24:20). These words were uttered by Christ at the close of His public ministry. “The earliest possible period to which this direction can refer, is the siege of Jerusalem—a period at least 40 years after the ascension of Christ, that is, after the full establishment of the Gospel dispensation, and after 'the Gospel of the kingdom had been preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations' (v. 14 and cf. Col. 1:6). At such an advanced period in the Gospel age, and in a season, too, of unparalleled distress, the disciples were, by the direction of their Lord, to make it a matter of special prayer that they might not need to take their flight on the Sabbath day . . . . It is impossible to entertain due respect to Christ as an infallible teacher, without admitting it to be His clear intention in this passage that the weekly Sabbath should continue after the Gospel dispensation was fully set up” (F. Fairbairn, from which much in this article is taken almost *verbatim*).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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August, 1939

### **SPIRITUAL NOURISHMENT.**

“Nourished up in the Words of Faith” (1 Tim. 4:6). We are living in a day when more and more attention is being paid to dietetics; foods are scientifically analyzed, the various grades of vitamins classified, and a serious effort made to obtain a well-balanced menu. With many the feeding of the body has become a regular fad; alas that so few evidence any concern about the feeding of their souls—that which returns to the dust is pampered, whereas that which returns to God is utterly neglected. Multitudes are filling their minds with trash, while their spirits are being starved. However, it is not to those who ignore their eternal interests that we now address ourselves; rather is it to the professing people of God we desire to offer a few words of instruction.

“Nourished up in the Words of Faith.” The taking of nourishment does not necessarily produce nutrition. Nor is the fault always in what has been eaten—sometimes the most wholesome food yields no good effect because of the condition of the one who consumes it. Various factors enter into real benefit being received from what is eaten. In developing our present theme let us point out, then, four of the things which are essential to nourishment—true alike both in the natural and the spiritual. First there must be a hearty appetite. Second, there must be suitable and wholesome food. Third, there must be proper mastication. Fourth, there must be the blessing of God thereon. No doubt other things are contributing agents, but these four are the primary ones.

First, there must be *a healthy appetite*. One cannot eat to profit when he is sick; nay, at such times, food is

usually repulsive. A good appetite is a mark of good health. Now it is true that we cannot bestow upon ourselves a hearty appetite, but we can do much to injure and destroy it. A child who is surfeited with candy has little relish for more wholesome diet; and a child of God who absorbs newspapers and novels, no longer finds the Word sweet to his taste. A person who gives way to strong drink loses his desire for solid food, and the believer who drinks into the spirit of this world will disdain the Heavenly Manna. Many a millionaire, through using up his nervous energy in his hectic quest for wealth, is quite unable to enjoy his meals or even partake of solids; and many a Christian has become so occupied with “service” that his own soul goes unnourished. What a tragedy when we lose our appetite for *spiritual* food.

Second, there must be *suitable food*: “Desire the sincere milk of the Word that ye may grow thereby” (1 Peter 2:2). That is why the Holy Scriptures are given to us—that we may grow in love and reverence for them, increase in the knowledge of them, be more and more regulated by them. It is only by feeding on this Heavenly Manna that strength is obtained for our pilgrim walk, for our warfare with sin and Satan, and for our service unto God and our fellows. To deprive ourselves of food issues in unfitness, weakness, sickness—true alike in the natural and the spiritual. How diligent most of us are in seeing to it that our bodies do not go without their needed food; are we as careful about the nourishment of our souls? Is it not at this very point we discover the explanation as to why so many believers fail to “grow in grace”? and why so many are feeble and useless?

Not only are we diligent in the feeding of our bodies, but most of us are very particular in *what* we eat. We know that poisons are dangerous, that tainted food is harmful, and that many of the patented specialties are but catch-pennies. Alas that so few are equally particular about their mental and spiritual food. Error has the same effect on the soul as poison does on the body, yet thousands of professing Christians will hear and read heretical men and suppose it will not harm them. And how many substitute the writings of good men for the Word itself? The very best writings of men are but the milk of the Word diluted. Milk direct from the cow is rich and pure; milk from the retailer is often skimmed, and sometimes watered down.

Third, there must be *proper mastication*. Meals which are hurriedly consumed and swallowed almost whole do us little good, and often much harm. A little food well chewed will prove far more beneficial than a larger quantity that is bolted. Our teeth are given us to use. The same is true spiritually; a few verses that are thoughtfully and prayerfully pondered will advantage us far more than two or three whole chapters skimmed through. Meditation stands to reading as mastication (chewing) does to eating. *Regularity* is also essential; we have too much common sense to try and eat enough on the Sabbath to suffice our bodies for the remainder of the week; then why be so foolish in adopting this device to the soul? Time must be found for communion with God even though it means an hour less in bed each night.

In proper mastication the food is duly mixed with our saliva, which is a provision of nature for aiding digestion, and it is the hurried gulping down of our food which prevents this. Now the counterpart of this in connection with spiritual nourishment is, that in order for the Word of God to do us good it must be mixed with *faith*. It was to this fact the Apostle referred when he pointed out how the Gospel was sent unto the Jews of old “but the Word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard” (Heb. 4:2). It is for this reason that in our text the Scriptures are termed “the Word of Faith,” for faith is their chief requirement.

Fourth, there must be *the Divine blessing*. No matter how healthy be our appetite, how wholesome the food we take, how carefully it be masticated—without the smile of God thereon it will profit us nothing. Food does not automatically nourish, any more than seed planted in the ground automatically grows of itself; the one as much as the other is entirely dependent on the Creator's blessing. If we are in the habit of asking God's blessing on the material food we eat (and a meal ought never to be taken without so doing), equally essential is it that we beg Him to sanctify unto us our *spiritual* food. What an example the Saviour has left us—“And looking up to Heaven, He *blessed*, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples” (Matt. 14:19). Then let us fail not to definitely ask God to bless unto us the Bread of Life—the reading of and meditation upon the Scriptures should ever be preceded by and followed with prayer for God to apply them in power to our hearts.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *7. Its Christianization.*

That the Judaical Sabbath, as such, has been abolished, we unhesitatingly affirm; but to conclude from this that there is now no “Sabbath” in the strict and proper sense of that term, we emphatically deny. Serious errors have been committed at either extreme. On the one hand there has been an insignificant company who have vigorously contended that God has given no command for any change to be made in the weekly Day of Rest, and therefore that we, in this dispensation, are required to observe the *seventh* day. On the other hand, another class has insisted that the “Sabbath” has been completely abolished, though they allow that it is the privilege of Christians (any *law* requiring the same, they deny) to honour Christ in a special manner on the *first* day of the week. The Truth lies between these two extremes: the Sabbath remains, though it has undergone some noticeable changes in its Christianization.

A thorough inquiry into the precise differences between the Judaical Sabbath and the Christian Sabbath (deeply important as such an inquiry is)—differences as to its significance, its penal sanction, its day of observance, etc.—would require a full exposition of the Siniatic covenant; but as we recently went into that subject at length, it is not necessary for us to traverse the same ground again. But a brief summary of its salient and distinctive features seems unavoidable. Originally, the Sabbath was “made for man” (Mark 2:27); it being required of him naturally, the light and law of nature suggesting that some time be set apart and dedicated to God for the observance of his solemn worship in the world. Man in his creation, with respect to the ends of God therein, was constituted under a covenant: the law of his obedience being

attended by promise and threatening, reward and punishment.

During the interval which elapsed between the fall of Adam and the Lord's deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the nations had completely apostatised from God, and had been given up by Him to a spirit of blindness (Rom. 1:21-28). The dealings of God with the Hebrews marked a fresh and distinctive departure in the Divine ways with mankind. At Sinai the descendants of Jacob were taken into special covenant relationship with Jehovah. As the Sabbath had been originally annexed to the covenant between God and man (Adam, and the race in him), the renovation of the covenant (at Sinai) necessarily required an especial renewal of the Sabbath, and the change of the covenant as to the nature of it, necessarily introduced a change of the Sabbath. In what respects, we shall endeavour to point out.

When God erected His Church in the wilderness (Acts 7:38), renewing the knowledge of Himself and of man's duty toward Him, in the posterity of Abraham, He gave unto them afresh the precepts of the Law and the Covenant of Works, for the rule of their obedience, reducing the same to Ten Commandments written on tables of stone. As thus delivered by Him, it was the same for the substance of it with the law of our creation or the original rule of our covenant obedience unto God. Yet as thus inscribed, there was an innovation in it, both as to its form and the principle of obligation. In form it was now made objective and external; and the immediate obligation unto its observance was prefaced by motives peculiar to their state and condition (Exo. 20:2). Later, its observance was continually pressed upon them by reasons taken from their peculiar relation to God, with His love and benefits unto them. It was now no more a moral command only, equally regarding all mankind, but had a *temporary* regard given to it, which was afterwards to be abolished.

The law was renewed as an ingredient in that economy under which God placed His Church at Sinai, though He did not bring His people under the Covenant of Works, in all the rigour of it—relief being found, for those betaking themselves to it, in the promise of grace in Christ. Nevertheless, there was begotten in the minds of the people such a sense of the demands of the Law and their obedience thereto, that it “gendereth to bondage” (Gal. 4:24). Annexed to the Law was the promise of, “Do this, and live”; and the threat, “cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the Law to do them.” Consequently, the Covenant form given to the Law at Sinai rendered the obedience of the people to it in a great measure servile. The death sentence was pronounced upon those who desecrated the Sabbath (Exo. 35:2, 3).

The moral Law, to which was attached many statutes of both a civic and ceremonial nature, was made the rule of the government of Israel, as a holy nation under the dominion of God Himself as their King. Thus the whole Decalogue as given at Sinai had a *political* use, that is, it was made the principal instrument of the polity or government of the Nation as peculiarly under the rule of God. Their polity, as to the kind of it, was a theocracy, over which God in a special manner presided as their Governor, and this was peculiar to that people. Hence the Sabbath amongst them came to have an absolute necessity accompanying it, of an outward carnal ordinance, under pain of death if they neglected the same.

Again—the Sabbath was made a part of their law for religious worship in their temporal Church state, in which and whereby the whole dispensation of the covenant which Israel was under, was directed to other

ends. Thus it had the nature of a shadow, representing good things to come, whereby the people were to be relieved from the rigour and curse of the whole law as a Covenant. Hence, new commands were given for the observance of the Sabbath, new motives advanced, new ends and uses formulated, so as to accommodate it to the dispensation of the Covenant then in force, but which was afterwards to be removed and taken away, and with it the Sabbath itself so far as it had relation thereto. Therefore we have no hesitation in subscribing to the following words of Owen:

“All these things in the law of the Sabbath are Mosaic: namely, the obligation that arose to its observance, from the promulgation of the Law unto that people at Sinai; the limitation of the day to the seventh or last of the week, which was necessary to that administration of the Covenant which God then made use of, and had a respect to a previous institution; the manner of its observance, suited to that servile and bondage frame of mind, which the giving of the law on Mount Sinai did generate in them, as being designed of God so to do; the engrafting of it into the system and series of religious worship then in force, by the double sacrifice annexed to it; with the various uses in, and accommodation it had to the rule of government in the commonwealth of Israel; in all which respects it is abolished, taken away.”

If, then, noticeable changes were made in connection with the Sabbath when God took the people of Israel into covenant relationship with Himself, need we wonder that other changes were made when the Siniatic covenant and constitution were abolished? In order to distinguish the Christian Sabbath from what had obtained for 15 centuries, was it not expedient, might we say, *essential*, that under the era of the new Covenant, it should be observed on a new and different day? But alas, the perversity of men has led not a few of them to argue from that very change of the day from the last to the first of the week, that the Sabbath itself is completely done away with under the Christian dispensation. They insist that an entirely new institution has displaced it, an institution which consists in a certain pre-eminence of the first day

Once again we avail ourselves freely of the writings of P. Fairbairn, and point out, first, even if we could assign no adequate reason for the seventh day being dropped and the first substituted in its place, a mere change of that kind would certainly not outweigh, with any serious-minded believer, the arguments we have produced in support of a Sabbath reaching from the creation of the world to the destruction of Jerusalem. This is a chain which links together Moses and Christ, the patriarchal, Levitical, and Christian times. We should certainly be the less disposed to set aside the large amount of evidence, and to view the change in question as in itself conclusive against the existence of a proper Sabbath, when we know that the *first* day, on being appropriated to acts of worship, received the name of “the Lord's Day” (Rev. 1:10). Why called emphatically *His*, but to intimate that He now claimed the same propriety in it that he had hitherto done in the seventh?

If the first day, as a day—that is, as a whole, and not some particular portion of it—is *the Lord's*, in a sense in which other days of the week are not, how can it possibly be so, except in being set apart for employments and services peculiar to itself, and more immediately connected with His own glory? Was not this very feature the distinctive characteristic of the seventh day: that it was *God's* day, because specially separated by Him for sacred purposes? And does not this very character appear plainly in the appellation, “the Lord's Day,” as transferring to the first day of the week that which had, essentially, marked the seventh day from Adam until Christ?

The principal feature which had distinguished the Sabbath from the very first, as designed for all classes and generations of men, is that a *seventh portion* of our time should be specially devoted to the worship of God, rather than the precise day of the week being the thing on which attention was to be fixed. It is the remembrance of a seventh day, as distinguished from the other six constantly going before and coming after it, which formed the substance of the Fourth Commandment, and that the seventh day was to be regarded as the last, rather than the first day of the week, appears only in what is assigned to the original ground of the appointment. We have no reason, but rather the contrary, to think that the Lord intended it to be always and solely connected with His own procedure in the work of creation.

At the giving of manna in the wilderness, when the Sabbath was restored after a period of oblivion, caused by the hard bondage of Egypt, the seventh day was counted from the time of God's beginning to bestow the manna. And instead of bidding them to keep it as a mere memorial of creation, He more frequently enforced it on their regard as a sign of the Covenant which He had with them, and a memorial of His goodness in delivering them from the land of bondage. After all this, is it not preposterous to suppose that the mere change of the day from the last to the first of the week, so as more distinctly to connect it with another and better Covenant and render it the fitting memorial of a higher and more glorious work, should utterly destroy its obligation or alter its character?

Again—let it be duly considered that the change was not made capriciously but for weighty and important reasons connected with the new work and covenant of God as distinguished both from that to which it stood immediately opposed in Judaism, and from that to which more remotely, but still more essentially, it stood opposed in creation. The observance of the last day of the week, as peculiarly set apart for God's service, though belonging like circumcision to an earlier state of things, had yet come, in great measure, to be connected with the Covenant made at Sinai. It was appointed to be a sign of that Covenant, and the reason for the day as a memorial of creation ceasing in course of time to be maintained among the Gentiles, the observance of it came ultimately to be regarded as a public testimony on the part of the Israelites of their adherence to the Covenant made with their fathers.

The need for a *change of day* in connection with the Sabbath under Christianity should now be the more apparent. The worship of God on the *seventh* day had been so blended with and merged into Judaism, that it could not serve as a proper sign and testimony to the world of the faith of the Gospel, and therefore without such a change as was actually made, one important end of this Divine institution and ordinance must otherwise have been lost. For the same reason that God abolished circumcision as the outward mark of His covenant people, He set aside the Judaical Sabbath as such; and for the same reason that He appointed baptism as the distinctive uniform of the Christian (Gal. 3:27) has He signalized the first day of the week as the Christian Sabbath.

But if we go beyond Sinai right back to the Divine work of creation, a yet stronger reason will be found for this change in the Day of Rest. As a memorial of that work, the Sabbath cannot be now what it originally was, for sin has entered with its destroying power, and laid creation, as it were, in ruins. The once beautiful and glorious inheritance is now given up a prey to the spoiler; and a memorial of it, while it tells us indeed of God's first designs of goodness toward His creatures, tells us at the same time how those designs have been opposed, and nature's life and glory have been brought down within the gulf of death.

We need then, for our peace and welfare, another work and covenant of God to repair the ruin of the first, and lay the foundation of a higher—even an imperishable glory.

A grander and more blessed production than the making of this material world has been achieved, even the bringing forth of a new creation, which cannot be marred by sin or Satan. The work of redemption immeasurably transcends in importance and value the work of the first creation, and hence it is most fitting that it should be signalized by a change in the Day of Rest to commemorate the rest of the Saviour from all His arduous and costly labours in the putting away of the sins of His people and His bringing in an everlasting righteousness for them. The transcendent work of Christ is therefore memorialized in the Sabbath by transferring it from the last to the first day of the week, for it was on *that* day the Redeemer rose triumphant from the grave as the Head of the new creation, the firstfruits of them that sleep, the prototype and pledge of a glorified humanity.

By the very act of His glorious exodus from the tomb, the Lord Jesus begets all who believe on His name unto an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away (1 Peter 1:3, 4). How appropriate, how delightful, then, the change made in connection with the Holy Day! Instead of seeking to take occasion from that change to impair or destroy the Sabbath, it should endear to us that blessed institution all the more. For it tells now, not so much of a paradise that has been lost, as of a better paradise that has been won; not so much of a covenant broken and a heritage spoiled, as of a covenant forever ratified by the blood of Christ and a kingdom that cannot be moved. If the corruptible work and covenant of nature had by Divine appointment its Sabbatical sign and memorial, must not this higher work and covenant much rather have it?

“If we refuse now to enter into the fellowship of Christ's rest by hallowing the day which He has set apart in His Church for spiritual rest and blessing, what is it in effect but to cut ourselves off from the hope of His redemption and declare our light esteem of His finished work? We conclude, therefore, that it is now, as it ever has been, the will of God that one whole day in seven should be kept holy to Himself; that since the resurrection of Christ, this has been Divinely appointed to be the first day of the week; and that this change, while it could do nothing to weaken the obligation of a proper Sabbath, was both necessary to make the observance of a Sabbath conducive to some of the ends for which it was appointed, and also gives to it the character which cannot fail greatly to enhance and endear its sacredness to every child of God” (P. Fairbairn, from whom much in the second part of this article is taken *verbatim*).—A.W.P.

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### ENJOYING CREATION.

Psalm 104 is all through a song of nature, the adoration of God in the great outward temple of the universe. Some in these modern times have thought it to be a mark of high spirituality never to observe nature; and I remember sorrowfully reading the expressions of a godly person, who, in sailing down one of the most famous rivers in the world closed his eyes, lest the picturesque beauties of the scene should divert his mind from scriptural topics. This may be regarded by some as profound spirituality; to me it seems to savor of absurdity. There may be persons who think they have grown in grace when they have attained to this; it seems to me that they are growing out of their senses. To despise the creating work of God—what is it but, in a measure, to despise God Himself? “Whoso mocketh the poor despiseth his Maker.”

To despise the Maker, then, is evidently a sin; to think little of God under the aspect of the Creator is a crime. We should none of us think it a great honour if our friends considered our productions to be unworthy of admiration, and more injurious to their minds than improving. If when they passed our workmanship they turned their eyes away, lest they should suffer injury by looking at it, we should not regard them as very respectful to ourselves: surely the despising of that which is made is akin to the despising of the Maker Himself. David tells us that, “the Lord shall rejoice in His works.” If He rejoices in what He has made, shall not those who have communion with Him rejoice in His works also? “The works of the Lord are great, sought out of them that have pleasure therein.” Despise not the work, lest thou despise the Worker.

The prejudice against the beauties of the universe reminds me of the lingering love to Judaism, which acted like a spell upon Peter of old. When the sheet knit at the four corners descended before him, and the voice said, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat," he replied that he had not eaten anything that was common or unclean. He needed that the voice should speak to him from Heaven again and again before he would fully learn the lesson, "What God hath cleansed that call not thou unclean." The Jew thinks this and that unclean, though Christ has cleansed it; and certain Christians appear to regard nature as unclean. The birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the glorious sunrise and sunset, the snow-clad Alps, the ancient forests, the boundless ocean, God hath cleansed them: call them not common. Here on this earth at Calvary where the Saviour died, and by His sacrifice offered not within walls and roofs, He made this outer world a temple wherein everything doth speak of God's glory. If thou be unclean, all things will be unclean to thee; but if thou hast washed thy robe and made it white in the blood of the Lamb, and if the Holy Spirit hath overshadowed thee, then this world is but a nether Heaven; it is but the lower chamber of which the upper story glows with the full splendour of God, where angels see Him face to face, and this lower story is not without glory, for in the Person of Christ Jesus we have seen God, and have fellowship with Him even now.

It appears to me that those who would forbear the study of nature, or shun the observation of its beauties, are conscious of the weakness of their own spirituality. When the hermits and monks shut themselves out from the temptations of life, foolish persons said, "These are strong in grace." Not so, they were so weak in grace that they were afraid to have their graces tried. They ran away from the battle like the cowards they were, and shut themselves up because they knew their swords were not of the true Jerusalem metal, and they were not men who could resist valiantly. Monasticism was the confession of a weakness, which they endeavoured to cover with the vain show of humility, and the pretence of superior sanctity. If my graces are strong, I can look upon the outward world, and draw forth its good without feeling its evil, if evil there be; but if my religion is mainly fictitious, then hypocrisy dictates to me the affectation of unusual spirituality, or at any rate I have not grace enough to rise from a contemplation of the works of God to a nearer communion with God Himself. It cannot be that nature of itself debases me, or diverts me from God, I ought to suspect a deficiency in myself when I find that the Creator's handiwork has not a good effect upon my soul.

Moreover, rest assured, brethren, that He who wrote the Bible, the second and clearest revelation of His Divine mind, wrote also the first Book, the book of nature; and who are we that we should derogate from the worth of the first because we esteem the second? Milton's "Paradise Regained" is certainly inferior to his "Paradise Lost," but the eternal God has no inferior productions, all His works are masterpieces. There is no quarrel between nature and revelation, fools only think so; to wise men the one illustrates and establishes the other. Walking in the fields at eventide, as Isaac did, I see in the ripening harvest the same God of whom I read in the Word that He covenanted that seed-time and harvest should not cease. Surveying the midnight skies, I remember Him who, while He calls the stars by their names, also bindeth up the broken in heart. Who will may neglect the volume of creation, or the volume of revelation: I shall delight in them both as long as I live.—C. H. Spurgeon.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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August, 1939

### **DIVINE WISDOM.**

So extremely desperate was the Fall of man, that it required the infinite and unsearchable wisdom of God Himself to find out a remedy against it. If the Lord should have proceeded thus far in mercy towards man and no farther—Thou art a wretched creature, and I am a righteous God; yea, so heavy is My wrath and so woeful thy condition, that I cannot choose but take compassion upon thee; and therefore I will put the matter into thine own hands. Requisite it is that My pity towards thee should not swallow up the respects to Mine own justice and honour, that My mercy should be a righteous and a wise mercy. Consult therefore together all ye children of men, and invent a way to reconcile My justice to one and another; set Me in a course to show you mercy without parting from Mine own right and denying the righteous demands of Mine offended justice, and I will promise you to observe it. I say, if the mercy of the Lord should have confined itself within these bounds, and referred the method of our redemption unto human discovery, we should forever have continued in a desperate state, everlastingly unable to conceive or so much as in fancy to frame unto ourselves a way of escape.

As the creatures before their being could have no thought or notion of their being educed out of nothing which they were before, so man fallen could not have the smallest conjecture or suspicion of any feasible way to deliver himself out of that misery into which he fell. If all the learning in the world were gathered into one man, and that man should employ all his time and study to frame unto himself the notions of a sixth or seventh sense, he would be as totally ignorant of the conclusion he sought at last as he was at first. For all human knowledge of natural things is wrought by a reflection upon those ideas which are

impressions made from those senses we already use, and are indeed nothing else but a kind of notional existence of things in the memory of man wrought by an external and sensible perception of that real existence which they have in themselves.

And yet in this case a sixth or seventh sense would agree *in genere proximo*, and so have some kind of cognition with those we already enjoy. But a new covenant, a new life, a new faith, a new salvation, are things *toto genere* beyond the strain and sphere of nature. That two should become one, and yet remain two still, as God and man do in one Christ; that He who maketh should be one with the thing which Himself hath made; that He who is above all should humble Himself; that He who filleth all should empty Himself; that He who blesseth all should be Himself a curse; that He who ruleth all should be Himself a servant; that He who was the Prince of Life, by whom are all things and all things subsist, should Himself be dissolved and die; that mercy and justice should meet together, and kiss each other; that the debt should be paid, and yet pardoned; that the fault should be punished and yet remitted; that death like Samson's lion should have life and sweetness in it, and be used as an instrument to destroy itself; these and the like evangelical truths are mysteries which surpass the reach of all the princes of learning in the world. They are to be believed by a spiritual light, which was not so much as possible to a human reason.—Edward Reynolds, 1648.

“Lord when we bend before Thy throne  
 And our confessions pour,  
 Teach us to feel the sins we own  
 And hate what we deplore.  
 Our broken spirits pitying see,  
 True penitence impart,  
 Then let a kindly flame from Thee  
 Beam hope on every heart.  
 When we disclose our wants in prayer  
 May we our will resign  
 And not a thought our bosoms share  
 That is not wholly Thine.  
 May faith each weak petition fill  
 And raise it to the skies,  
 And teach our hearts 'tis goodness still  
 That grants it, or denies.”

—Edward Bickersteth.

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September, 1939

### **SUFFERING SAINTS.**

“Wherefore, let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator” (1 Peter 4:19). As the nature of fallen man is very backward to do good, so likewise to suffer evil; and hence it is there are so many exhortations in the Word both to the one and to the other. There is not a little in this Epistle on the subject of “suffering” (which has prime reference to opposition from the world), and many are the inducements advanced for the bearing of it in a God-honouring way. Varied indeed are the grounds for patience mentioned and the streams of comfort therein opened to the persecuted people of God—read through the Epistle with that particular thought in mind. Limiting ourselves to the more immediate context: the Christian is not to be unduly perplexed at his troublous lot (v. 12), rather is he to rejoice because it brings him into fellowship with Christ (vv. 13, 14). Yet we must carefully see to it that our afflictions are not incurred through our own wickedness or folly (vv. 15, 16). Vastly different is the *end* of a Christian from that of the wicked (vv. 17, 18).

“Wherefore—in view of all the reasons and encouragements given in the context—let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to Him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.” In different ways and in various degrees the Christian is bound to meet with trying opposition: “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12). No matter where they reside, the saints live among those who cannot but cause them suffering: and as Scripture makes abundantly clear, our worst afflictions are to be expected from those who profess to be our brethren and sisters in Christ. Moreover, there is much within the saint himself which cannot but be the cause and

occasion of suffering: indwelling corruptions which ever resist the actings of grace, lusts which have to be mortified, a conscience which accuses us when we displease God.

But the grand thing in which we are here to take to heart is the fact that the suffering of saints is “according to the will of God.” Those oppositions he encounters, the injuries done to him are not fortuitous: they are not the result of blind chance or fickle fortune, but are according to Divine ordination and ordering. How inexpressibly blessed to be assured of that! Does it not at once remove the bitterest ingredient from our cup of trouble? The saint never suffers except by the will of God. He who is too wise to err and too loving to be unkind is the One who mixes the medicine and hands it to us. If only we could always realize this, how many rebellious repinings would be silenced, and the rod meekly borne. True, we do not suffer all the time, for God tempers the wind according as our case requires, and graciously grants us brief respites.

Now in view of the fact that suffering is inevitable as long as we are on earth, and particularly because it is “according to the will of God,” our gracious Father, what is the Christian's duty in connection therewith? To commit the keeping of his soul to Him in well doing. The *manner* of this committal is “in well doing.” And this, first, *before* suffering comes upon us. When some worker of iniquity afflicts a child of God, what a comfort it is if he has the testimony of a good conscience that he is suffering for “well doing” and not because he has wronged his persecutor. How watchful we should be in seeing to it that none can justly speak evil of us and that we do nothing to warrant our enemies hurting us. Then let us follow a course of “well doing” continually. Second, in the suffering itself. No matter how unprovoked the opposition, we must carry ourselves rightly under persecution: so far from harbouring a spirit of retaliation, we are required to do good unto those who do us evil.

Not only are we to be active in “well doing” unto those who cause us suffering, but our carriage is also to be good with respect to *God*: there must be a meek behaviour under His afflicting hand, with no murmuring against Him. This is of vast importance in connection with the cause of God on earth: that we betray it not through fear or cowardice, and dishonour it not by base retaliation against our oppressors. When we display a Christ- like spirit under afflictions, conducting ourselves in the fear of God and make conscience of our duty, it will exert a strong influence on those who wrong us: touching the hearts of the indifferent and closing the mouths of the obstinate. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but spiritual. Far more will be accomplished by prayer, than by taking things into our own hands and seeking to avenge ourselves.

We are not only to commit our souls unto God as to a faithful Creator, but this duty is to be performed “in well doing.” In the suffering itself we should have an eye to God, an eye on ourselves, and an eye to the cause in hand. We must not commit our souls to God in idleness: it is not sufficient that we abstain from evil doing, we are to be active in well doing. Nor may we resort to ungodly compromises in order to escape suffering, for that would be evil, and sin is far, far worse than to have suffering inflicted upon us. Whatever may be the present gain of pleasing men at the expense of displeasing God, the future loss will be immeasurably greater: prayerfully ponder Mark 8:38.

And *what is it* we are to “commit to God in well doing”? Our name, our estate, our bodies, our friends; but

chiefly and above all, the keeping of our souls. The soul is our most excellent part. Though the body be burned at the stake, that is a trifle if our soul be preserved unto everlasting glory. Though all our earthly goods be taken from us, what is that if the inestimably precious jewel of our soul is safe in the hands of God? The value of our souls is to be gauged by the price which Christ paid for their redemption. Therefore, whatever trouble or peril we be in at the hands of the wicked, let our first concern be our souls, that it may be well with them. When a man's house is on fire, he naturally seeks to rescue first that on which he sets the most store; let it be so with the Christian when fiery trials are his portion.

And what is it that we should desire our souls to be kept from? Why, from sin, from doing evil, from not only failing to be profited from the suffering but to be spiritually injured thereby. It is when we are slandered, ill treated, wronged, unjustly persecuted, that we most need God's preserving grace, for it is natural for us to want to “get our own back.” But when we truly comply with the injunction of Christ's “love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you” (Matt. 5:44), then has grace triumphed over the flesh and God is greatly glorified. Nor is it a difficult matter to commit our souls unto God when our hearts are impressed with His *faithfulness*. If He unfailingly supplies the temporal needs of all His creatures, will He fail to minister to the spiritual wants of His children? No indeed.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *7. Its Christianization.*

In the first section of our remarks upon the Christianization of the Sabbath (in the August issue) we confined our attention mainly to two things. First, in pointing out that the many arguments advanced for the perpetuation of the Sabbath in this dispensation (June and July articles) cannot possibly be rendered invalid by the mere fact of a change in the Day of Rest—that it most certainly does not follow from the first day of the week now being the one specially hallowed for Divine worship, a proper Sabbath as such no longer obtains. Second, we sought to show that a change of economy required a change in the day of Sabbath observance: if the New Covenant was to stand out with clear distinctness from the Old, then a new Day of Rest best accorded with and testified to the establishment of the same.

We are now to dwell more particularly on the fact that the first day of the week is the one ordained of God for the Christian Sabbath. We must ask our friends to kindly remember that these pages are read by people of varied shades of thought, some of them having been brought up under quite different teaching from what others have received, and as we desire (under God) to help one and all, we often feel obliged to take up an aspect of a subject which will not appeal to the majority, yea which may seem to them quite needless. Some of our readers have been influenced by “Seventh Day Adventism,” and we must confess that in our wide reading we have come across very little indeed which was calculated to solve their difficulties; and therefore we deem it well to enter carefully and with some detail into this point.

The old creation comprised in it the law of obedience of man unto God, this being implanted in his moral nature, which gave inclination unto the observance of it. The law of creation had a covenant inseparably annexed to it, as had also the Siniatic constitution. The immediate end of those covenants was to bring men by due obedience unto the rest of God, and as a pledge thereof and also a means of attaining it, the Day of Rest was instituted. All these things therefore must have a place also in the New Covenant belonging unto the new creation, the immediate end of which is our entrance into the rest of God, as the Apostle proves at length in Hebrews 4. But therein we are not absolutely to enter into God's rest as a Creator and Rewarder, but to God in Christ as *Redeemer*, the foundation of which is the work of God in the new creation, and the complete satisfaction or complacency which He finds in Christ's atonement.

Thus it should be apparent that the particular day of the week on which the Sabbath is to be observed, resolves itself into *what Covenant* we walk under before God. If the Siniatic covenant has been annulled, then of necessity the Day of Rest has been changed. On the other hand, to insist that the Sabbath as given to the Jews is not abolished requires us to perpetuate the whole system of Mosaic ordinances which stood on the same bottom with it. That this is not simply an inference or dogmatic assertion of ours, that it is actually a Scriptural proposition is clear from the whole argument of Hebrews 7-10. "For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (Heb. 7:12). "The covenant being changed, the rest which was the end of it being changed, and the way of entering into God's rest being changed, a change of the day of rest must of necessity thereon ensue" (John Owen). With these introductory remarks we now proceed to offer further proofs for the *first* day of the week being the Christian Sabbath.

First, it was *plainly adumbrated in Old Testament times*. This change in the weekly Day of Rest from the last to the first day of the week, that is, from the seventh to the eighth, as everything pertaining to the Christian era, was intimated under various types and shadows. The work of creation was finished in six days, and on the seventh God rested from His work, which completed a week, or the first series of time. The eighth day, then, was the first of a new series, and on that day Christ rose as the Head of the new creation. The eighth day is accordingly signalized in the Old Testament, pointing in a manner the most express to the day when Christ entered into His rest, and when in commemoration thereof His people are to rest.

Circumcision was to be administered unto children on the *eighth* day (Gen. 17:12). On the *eighth* day, but not before, animals were accepted in sacrifice (Lev. 22:27). On the *eighth* day the consecration of Aaron as high priest, and his sons, after various ceremonies, was completed (Lev. 9:1). On the *eighth* day was the cleansing from issues, emblematic also of sin (Lev. 15:29). On the *eighth* day atonement was made for the Nazarite who was defiled (Num. 6:10). When the sheaf of the firstfruits was brought to the priest, it was to be accepted on the *eighth* day (Lev. 23:11)—a distinctive type of the resurrection of Christ. The *eighth* day was sanctified at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chron. 7:9), and in its sanctification at the time of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 29:17).

Now, can any spiritual mind suppose for a moment that this repeated use of the eighth day, in connection with the most solemn services of God's ancient people and in a manner so conspicuous, was without a special purpose? Did not the wisdom of God single out that day for some very important end? intimating

thereby an antitypical new beginning? The *eighth* day corresponds with the first day of the week, on which according to all those appointments, Christ was received as the Firstborn from the dead, His sacrifice accepted, and on which, as the great High Priest He was “consecrated for evermore,” having made atonement for His people, by which they are cleansed from all sin. That purpose of God is fully developed in the New Testament, where He who is Lord of the Sabbath, without in the slightest degree changing the obligation to observe a seventh day, appropriated to Himself the first instead of the last day of the week.

Second, this change is clearly *intimated by what is recorded of the first day in the New Testament*. The alteration in the day of Sabbath rest and worship was emphasized by Christ's personal visitations to His assembled disciples on the first of the week. After His appearing to the travelers to Emmaus, the Saviour was seen no more until His mysterious and blessed manifestation in the upper room. “Then the same day at evening, being the first of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you” (John 20:19). What is the Holy Spirit's object here in mentioning the particular day of the week? Was it not to inform us that this was now a *particular* day? Jews would understand at once what was signified by the notice that a religious “assembly” occurred on the *seventh* day, and Christians are to equally understand what is denoted by such an allusion to the *first* day.

The next detail to be noticed in the above passage is, “the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for *fear of the Jews*.” What is indicated by those words? Let it be remembered that the Lord had already “opened their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures” (Luke 24:45), which must mean that, in a measure at least, they now knew the types had given place to the reality. We also know that, “He through the Holy Spirit had given *commandments* unto the Apostles whom He had chosen, to whom also He showed Himself alive after His passion by many infallible proofs” (Acts 1:2, 3). What other conclusion, then, can be drawn, but that the disciples now observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week, and that they therefore took the precaution of fastening the doors because they knew how incensed the Jews would be for their departure from the ancient observance of the Sabbath on the seventh day?

Thomas was absent on the above occasion, and when he learned of its marvels, expressed strong unbelief. Throughout that week the Lord Jesus did not reappear. But when the disciples assembled again on the *first day* of the next week, Thomas being present with them, He once more stood in their midst and said, “Peace be unto you” (John 20:26). Is there nothing marked by that interval of time? His other interviews with them are not thus dated! Surely the fact that Christ was not seen by His disciples for a whole week, and that He then appeared to them again on the first day when they met for special worship, clearly signifies His definite sanction of *this* as the appointed day of meeting with His disciples? And is not this most expressly confirmed by the Holy Spirit's advent at Pentecost? Most assuredly the Spirit's descent on the first day of the week crowned this ordinance and ratified the newly instituted Christian Sabbath.

Third, the first day of the week was *celebrated by the early Church*. That this was how the Apostles understood the matter appears from their custom, for they assembled together for the breaking of bread and the preaching of the Word “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7). Are we not compelled to conclude that what the Apostles did, and what the churches did under their supervision, must have been done in accord with the revealed will of their Divine Master? But, it will be objected, If God requires the

Sabbath to be duly observed on the first day of the week during this Christian dispensation, why has He not given a definite command through His Apostles to that effect in the Epistles? To this question we make three replies. In the first place, it savors strongly of impiety: a taking it upon ourselves to say *how* God is to make known His pleasure to us—He has other ways of declaring His will besides through express precepts.

In the second place, such a question loses sight altogether of the situation in which many of the early Christians found themselves—a situation very different from that which generally obtains today. In the first generation of the Christian era it was quite impossible for the Sabbath to be kept with the same sacred strictness with which the Jewish Sabbath had been observed. So long as the Christian Church was confined to the boundaries of Palestine, and its members were made up of Jewish believers and proselytes, as it was for some time, it was required of all the converts to continue in an exact observance of the Jewish Sabbath in compliance with the law of the land. They did, in addition, observe the Lord's Day, so far as that was possible privately; but they had it not in their power to render the first day one of holy rest for all their fellows.

When the Christian Church enlarged her borders and converts from the Gentiles added thereto, the Christian Sabbath had to encounter most formidable obstacles and was met by almost constant opposition. Let it also be carefully borne in mind that many of the early Gentile converts were the slaves of heathen masters, and it will at once appear how impossible it was for the Church to secure anything approaching Sabbath observance, so far as that implies the setting apart of the first day from all secular interests and the devoting of it solely unto Divine worship. It was therefore most merciful on God's part to lay not upon them a burden which they could not have borne. Nevertheless there is clear evidence that those early Christians devoted at least a part of the first day to special worship so far as their distressed and persecuted state rendered possible.

But in the third place, we ask, Is it true that no Divine command for the sanctification of the first day is to be found in the Epistles? And we reply, No, it is not. “Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let everyone of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1, 2). “I have given order,” is certainly the language of authority, and cannot be regarded as anything less than an apostolic command. It is to be duly noted that Paul “gave order” concerning not only the principle of systematic Christian giving (for the relief of indigent saints), but also stipulated the time when such collections were to be made, that being appointed for “the first day of the week.” Nor was such a regulation peculiar to the church at Corinth, as is intimated by his, “so I teach everywhere in every church” (4:17), “so ordain I in all churches” (7:17). Moreover, he expressly tells us, “the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord” (1 Cor. 14:37).

“In view of this important verse, we may remark: there is here clear proof that the *first* day of the week was observed by the church at Corinth as holy time. If it were not, there can have been no propriety in selecting that day in preference to any other in which to make the collection. It was the day which was set apart to the duties of religion, and therefore an appropriate day for the exercise of charity and the bestowment of alms. There can have been no reason why this day should have been designated except that

it was a day set apart to religion, and therefore deemed a proper day for the exercise of benevolence towards others. This order extended also to the churches in Galatia, proving also that the first day of the week was observed by them, and was regarded as a day proper for the exercise of charity towards the poor and afflicted. And if the first day of the week was observed, by apostolic authority in those churches, it is morally certain that it was observed by others. This consideration, therefore, demonstrates that it was the custom to observe this day, and that it was observed by the authority of the early founders of Christianity” (A. Barnes).

It is abundantly clear, then, from this passage that the *first* day of the week was by Divine authority appointed for Divine worship—for this “collection” was an act of Christian fellowship. Ere passing on, it should be pointed out that the Greek which is here rendered “the first (day) of the week” is the very same expression that is employed by the four Evangelists in connection with the resurrection of Christ (Matt. 28:1; Mark 16:1; Luke 24:1; John 10:1), also in John 20:19 when He appeared to the disciples in the upper room. The word used is “Sabbaton,” which means both “week” and “Sabbaths.” Literally, then, it reads, “the first of *the Sabbaths*,” the Holy Spirit using this particular term to denote the beginning of a new series. Thus we need not have the slightest hesitation in speaking of “The Christian Sabbath.”

The Christian Sabbath was most strikingly honoured by Christ Himself in His glorious appearing on the isle of Patmos and the Prophetic revelation which He there made to His servant John. In narrating the wondrous visions which he there received, the Apostle describes the time when they were given to him as, “on the Lord's Day” (Rev. 1:10). Now all the days of the week are the Lord's, but that one of them should be singled out and thus designated to distinguish it from the others, shows that *this* day is His in a *peculiar sense*, as specially devoted to His honour. It is called “the Lord's Day” for precisely the same reason that the holy feast is called “the Lord's Supper” (1Cor. 11:20)—the one as a memorial of His death, the other of His resurrection. This particular designation supplies further proof that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28).

A number of testimonies are still extant that the Christians in the first three centuries observed the Sabbath on the first day of the week. “On the day which is called Sunday, all, whether dwelling in the towns or in the villages, hold meetings, and the memoirs of the Apostles and the writings of the Prophets are read, as much as the time will permit; then the reader closing, the president in a speech exhorts and incites to an imitation of those excellent examples; then we all rise and pour forth united prayers” (Justin Martyr, in his Apology: A.D. 150). Another witness of the same era is Eusebius, “All things whatever that it was duty to do on the Sabbath, these we have transferred to the Lord's Day, as more appropriately belonging to it, because it has a precedence, and is first in rank, and more honourable than the Jewish Sabbath. It is delivered to us that we should meet together on this day,” (Comments on Psalm 92).—A.W.P.

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### **A TENDER HEART.**

“Because thine heart was tender, and thou hast humbled thyself before the LORD, when thou heardest what I spake against this place . . . I also have heard thee, saith the LORD” (2 Kings 22:19). This was part of the message which God sent in response to an inquiry made by the godly king Josiah. It occurred at a time when the earthly people of God had sunken very low—so low that “the Book of the Law” had been lost, and was only then recovered (v. 8). The sacred Book was read in the hearing of the king, and so deeply was he affected by its solemn message, “he rent his clothes” (v. 11). As he learned of the greatness of Jehovah's wrath, which was kindled against his subjects, Josiah sent messengers to inquire of the Lord. The answer was that sore judgment would certainly fall upon Jerusalem, but that the king would be removed from this world before the storm of Divine wrath should burst.

That the above is recorded for our instruction scarcely needs to be pointed out, and deeply important and valuable are the lessons illustrated thereby. It tells us that the One with whom we have to do takes cognizance of the state of our hearts. It reveals to us the fact that God's dealings with us in Providence are regulated—in part, at least—by the state of our hearts. It announces to us that a *tender heart* is of great price in the sight of the Lord. It makes evident that the tenderness of Josiah's heart was the reason why Divine judgment did not fall upon his kingdom in his own lifetime. It presents to us the startling and blessed spectacle of a man with a tender heart at a time when spirituality was at its lowest ebb in Israel. It makes clear to us what are the marks or characteristics of a tender heart.

What an excellent thing, then, is a “tender heart.” What delight it gives unto the Lord. Why certainly, for it is the product of His own handiwork. By nature the heart of fallen man is very far from being “tender” *Godwards*, for *that* is what was denoted in the case of Josiah. No, sad to say, it is the very opposite: so far as the Lord is concerned, the heart of every descendant of Adam is hard, callous, stubborn and defiant. Before it can become tender, a miracle of *grace* needs to be wrought upon it. It is to this the words of the Prophet refer: “I will put a new spirit within you[them]; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh” (Ezek. 11:19). Whatever be the future application of these words to the nation of Israel, the substance of them is most assuredly made good every time a soul is truly born again.

A “tender heart,” then, stands in direct antithesis from a hard one. It is the opposite of a heart of *stone*, which is cold, lifeless, not responsive. It is a spiritual, a supernatural thing: we stress this because some confuse with it the workings of natural conscience. There are not a few who mistake the fluctuations of natural conscience for a heart made tender in the fear of the Lord, and in this age of superficiality this is scarcely to be wondered at. There are plenty of unregenerate people who have consciences that are—in certain directions—very alert and active: witness the deluded Roman Catholics who would not dream of eating any animal meat during “lent,” yet these very people have no compunction in worshipping images of wood and stone. Verily such religionists “strain at a gnat and swallow a camel.” Such is man the world over until and unless sovereign grace is pleased to bestow upon him a tender heart.

Natural conscience is intensely superstitious. It is most punctilious over self-inflicted austerities, and most watchful against violating self-imposed rules—yet it will commit sins which one who has the fear of God in his heart would not be willingly guilty of for gold or rubies. On the other hand, the very same conscience will stumble over the veriest trifles, regarding which, one who is enlightened by God and regulated by His Word would not feel the least scruple about. Natural conscience will “pay tithes of mint, anise, and cummin,” while it “omits the weightier matters of the Law” (Matt. 23:23). It will refuse to enter Pilate's judgment hall, “lest it should be defiled” (John 18:28), and that, at the very time when its possessors were venting their hatred against the Christ of God. Thus the distinction between the superstitious workings of conscience in the natural man and the activities of a “tender heart” in the child of God is clear-cut, and there is no excuse for confusing the one with the other.

A heart which has been made tender in the fear of God is one which moves as the Holy Spirit works upon it: moves not away from but toward the One whom the Spirit is here to glorify, for the Divine will is its orbit. “It is like the mariner's compass, which having been once touched by the magnet, always turns toward the North. It may indeed oscillate and tremble backwards and forwards, but still it will return to the pole, and ultimately remain fixed at the point whence it was temporarily disturbed. So when the heart has been touched by the Spirit, and has been made tender in God's fear, it may for a time waver to the right hand or to the left, but it is always trembling and fluctuating till it points toward God, as the eternal center of its happiness and holiness” (The Gospel Pulpit, 1843).

Let us now be a little more specific. A “tender heart” is not only one of Divine production and is the opposite of a hard and unregenerate heart, but it is a *sensitive* one—just as a tender plant is exceedingly sensitive to chilly winds and biting frosts. A heart that is tender in the fear of God shrinks from all sin and makes conscience of the same. So long as it retains its tenderness, it firmly refuses to trifle with that which

the wicked make a sport of. It shuns the very appearance of evil, and hates the garment spotted by the flesh. Its earnest and constant prayer is, “Lead me not unto temptation, but deliver me from evil.” Because it is so sensitive, it trembles at the Word of God” (Isa. 66:2), for His holy awe is upon that soul. Consequently, it deems the contents of that Word far too sacred to be made the subject of carnal jangling and argument.

A tender heart is one which has a deep concern for the glory of God and the welfare of His kingdom. Superlatively was this exemplified by the Lord Jesus Christ: who so thoroughly absorbed with the honour of His Father and the furtherance of His cause on earth, His own interests and aggrandizement were completely swallowed up in magnifying the One who had sent Him. And the same principle is found in each of His followers, though with vastly different degrees of manifestation. The tender heart is one in which the love of God is shed abroad, and just so far as that is allowed to dominate and regulate do we seek to please Him. Consequently, a tender heart is one which is deeply grieved, touched to the quick, by everything which dishonours his best Friend—whether it be seen in others or discovered in himself. What more tender than the eye, and what so sensitive to a foreign substance!

A “tender heart” is pliant. The heart of the unregenerate is likened unto “the nether millstone” (Job 41:24), but that which is wrought upon by the Holy Spirit resembles wax—receptive to His impressions upon it. The stony heart is impervious to pleadings and threatenings alike, but the tender heart is amenable and responsive to the Divine call. Man in his natural state says with Pharaoh, “Who is the LORD, that I should obey His voice?” (Exo. 5:2), but one which has been supernaturally quickened asks, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). The more tender the plant, the more readily it lends itself to being trained or twined around an upright stake. So it is with the child of God. In his “first love” he freely yields himself unto God as one that is alive from the dead, and his members as instruments of righteousness unto God” (Rom. 6:13). This tenderness and pliability of heart is evidenced by its possessor humbling himself before God—as was clearly the case with Josiah (2 Kings 22:19).

A tender heart is *conscientious*. It makes its possessor diligent in the performance of duty. If an employer, he will not oppress and be a hard taskmaster, but be just, and considerate, knowing that he also has a Master in Heaven. If an employee, he will not shirk his work, but will do it with all his might whatsoever his hand findeth to do, with good will, “as to the Lord” (Eph. 6:7). It makes its possessor careful in heeding the Divine exhortations and warnings. He lays to heart such a word as, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15). How tender we are of our eye: no matter how tiny the particle of grit which enters and irritates, we quickly and diligently seek to extract it—equally zealous is a tender heart to remove whatever endangers spiritual fruitfulness.

It makes its possessor considerate of the rights and needs of his fellows. He will not take advantage of kindness nor disregard the welfare of those about him. He will deny himself rather than callously ignore the comfort of his neighbours. When he sees one in dire distress he will not pass by on the other side, but go and endeavour to relieve him. A heart which is tender Godwards is never hard and cruel manwards.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### **SPIRITUAL NURSES.**

“But we were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children” (1 Thess. 2:7). What a delightful figure did the Apostle here employ, and how blessedly it depicts the ditties of the minister's office in connection with one section of those who are committed to his charge. Unto those who are but babes in Christ he sustains the relationship of a nurse. What wisdom, what tenderness, what patience this calls for. His infantile charges are to be fed with the pure milk of the Word. Care has to be taken that they get plenty of *rest*, and not pressed into “service” for which they are utterly unfit. How beautifully this is brought out in Isaiah 40:11, where we behold the Good Shepherd carrying the “lambs” in His arms. What a lesson is there pointed for all His undershepherds to deal with the little ones as such, nourishing and tending to them.

But there comes a time when we *outgrow* the need for nurses, and it is just as harmful for those reaching the age of adolescence to be treated as though they were still in the nursery, as it would be if infants were forced to attempt tasks suited only to adults. We never tire of calling attention to some of the many ways in which the natural adumbrates the spiritual, for simple and obvious though this is, yet it is surprising how often the lessons to be learned therefrom are overlooked. During the first few months of our earthly existence we were entirely dependent upon the ministrations of others, being quite incapable of doing anything for ourselves. Even when learning to walk, other hands had to support us. But would it not be pathetic if such were the case with us *now*?

It is lamentable when a boy in his teens is still tied to his mother's apron strings; yet is it not equally deplorable for those who have been Christians many years to be tied to their minister's apron strings? Yet how often we witness this very thing. There is a certain class who seem to be afraid, or at any rate unwilling, to think for themselves—to search the Scriptures for themselves, and act accordingly—and we suspect that in many cases the preacher is as much to be blamed as they are. It is true that he is their teacher, and as such he should possess a wider and deeper knowledge of spiritual things than they have. Yet is it not his duty to instruct them—to familiarize themselves with God's Word, and thus become qualified to “*Prove* all things: hold fast that which is good” (1 Thess. 5:21)? In other words, the preacher is not to be a nurse unto them all their lives.

It has long been our conviction that the preacher who is really of greatest service to his people is the one who makes them most independent of creature help and casts them back directly upon God Himself. For souls to run to their pastor every time they are in trouble, or look to him to solve all their spiritual problems, is virtually to give him the same place in their lives as the deluded Papists accord their “priests.” This is not only to rob God of His glory, but also retards their spiritual progress. It is with God Himself I most need to deal, and any man who comes between me and the Lord is really a hindrance, no matter how good his intentions may be. Moreover, the preacher is human, and therefore liable to err: but God is omniscient and never misdirects. “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask *of God*” (James 1:5).

Some time ago we had a letter from one of our readers to say she was much perturbed over the matter of baptism, and asking us to communicate our own views thereon. We answered by saying that while we rejoiced to learn she was exercised upon this important ordinance, yet we were disappointed that *our* opinion had been asked for. We stated that if we gave it, it could not be of any real value to her: that she had the same Bible to consult that we had, and urged her to prayerfully study the New Testament and act thereon—taking no man's word or advice. We knew that what we had said would be a real test, and that if she belonged to that hyper-sensitive class which is so numerous today, she would be offended. But committing the matter to the Lord, we counted upon Him to be so overruling that He would be glorified and she satisfied.

Our inquirer thanked us for our letter, saying, “I absolutely concur with you that it would not help me for you to answer my question regarding immersion. I must search the Word prayerfully, and be entirely obedient to that light God gives me . . . You must agree it is hard for a young Christian to know *what* the Word teaches (humanly speaking) when one spiritual man of God teaches that it says one thing, and another apparently equally spiritually-minded man teaches from the Word the opposite.” To which we replied, “Yes, my dear friend, I freely grant that it is far from easy to ascertain what God's Word teaches while we practically shut ourselves up to hearing or reading what is now being given out by those claiming to be 'Bible Teachers'; yea, I go so far as to say that it is impossible—nothing but confusion can be the result.”

Sooner or later there comes a time in the lives of most real Christians when those words, “Cease ye from man” (Isa. 2:22) are applied to their hearts in Divine power. This will not mean that they now refuse to hear God's servants or read their writings, but that they will no longer place the same blind confidence in their teachers as the Papists do in their priests. Instead, they will emulate the Bereans, who did not

mechanically accept what they heard even from the lips of the Apostles, but “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). This is what our young friend did, and in her last letter she was able to tell us that the Lord had made clear her duty and she had been Scripturally baptized. How happy she was that her faith stood not “in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (1 Cor. 2:5). She added, “I can perceive well how the man who throws me back upon the Lord Himself helps me the most.” Spiritual nurses have their place, but they become a snare when we fail to outgrow their need.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *7. Its Christianization.*

From the beginning God determined that the ruination of the old creation should be followed by the producing of a new creation, with a new law of that creation, a new covenant, and a new Sabbath rest, unto His own glory by Jesus Christ. The renovation of all things by the Mediator was Divinely foretold (Acts 3:21): it was to be a “time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). From the Epistles we learn that this renovation of all things has been accomplished by Christ: “old things are passed away,” etc. (2 Cor. 5:17)—the old covenant, the old order of worship, the Judaical Sabbath. “That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, which are in Heaven and which are on earth; in Him” (Eph. 1:10): only those things pertaining to the Mosaic economy remain which are useful to our living unto God, and they abide not on their old foundation, but on a *new disposition of them in Christ*: cf., 1 Corinthians 9:21.

Thus it is with the Holy Sabbath: it remains, yet it has undergone a decided renovation. As the incarnation of God's Son affected the chronology of the world (for all civilized time is, by common consent, dated from the year of His birth!), so His death and resurrection terminated the old covenant and ratified the new, and this necessarily resulted in a change of the weekly day of rest. Last month we pointed out that the *first* day of the week as now being the one Divinely appointed for Sabbath observance was, first, adumbrated in the Old Testament types, where “the *eighth* day” is so conspicuous. Second, that it was clearly intimated by what is recorded in the New Testament: the first day being that of our Lord's

resurrection and the day of meeting with His disciples. Third, that it was so celebrated by the early Church: Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2.

We are now to consider, fourth, that this change was *conclusively demonstrated in Hebrews 4*. We will first call attention to the fact itself as there stated, and then endeavour to indicate and elucidate the course of the Apostle's argument in that chapter. In Hebrews 4:8 it is expressly affirmed, "for if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of *another* day." What this other "day" is, may be unequivocally ascertained from the context: it is the Holy Sabbath—"God did rest the seventh day from all His work" (v. 4). So, too, immediately after mentioning "another day" (i.e. another or different one from the "seventh") the Apostle went on to say, "There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God" (v. 9). In proof of this and also to identify this "*another* day" he declared, "For He (not "they," but "He," which is Christ) that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His" (v. 10).

What has just been pointed out is quite simple and easy to understand, but in order to grasp the force of the Apostle's argument we need to gird up the loins of our minds and attend very closely to his chain of reasoning. First, we must observe that here in chapter 4 he is *continuing* what he had said in chapter 3. There he gave an exhortation unto faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:1-6), and this he enforced by a quotation from Psalm 95, which contained a pointed exhortation and a solemn warning taken from the case of those who fell under Divine wrath because they were guilty of the sin contrary to the duties of faith, obedience, and perseverance (3:7-11). This he at once follows by making application of the warning unto the Hebrews, and by expounding certain expressions in this quotation which he had made from the Psalmist (3:12-18).

Because the words of Psalm 95 contain not only a warning applicable to New Testament saints, and more especially because those words also had interwoven in them a prophecy (note "promise" in Heb. 4:1) concerning the rest of God in Christ by the Gospel and our duty thereon, Paul proceeded to enlarge upon and confirm his exhortation in 3:12, 13, still using the language of Psalm 95 for that end. First, he propounds the duty which he aimed to press on the Hebrews (4:1, 2). Second, he established the foundation of his exhortation, by showing that the "rest" mentioned by David was still future when he wrote Psalm 95 (Heb. 4:3). Third, he enters into a careful discussion of and differentiates between the various "rests" of God (vv. 4-10). Fourth, he concludes by returning to and repeating his original exhortation (v. 11).

Let it be clearly grasped at this stage that the Apostle's design in Hebrews 4:4-11 was to *confirm* what he had laid down in verses 1-3, which we paraphrase thus: There is under the Gospel a promise of entering into the rest of God left or remaining unto believers, and they *do enter* into that rest by mixing the promise of it with faith. It was the more necessary to press this upon the Hebrews: that notwithstanding their ancient and present enjoyment of the land of Canaan, yet their fathers fell short of entering into God's rest because of their unbelief, and that now they (their children) were under a new trial or test, a new rest being proposed unto them in the promise. This he proves by a testimony out of Psalm 95, whereof he had previously treated in Hebrews 3.

Now the application of Psalm 95 to the case of the Hebrews was liable to a serious objection: the “rest” mentioned there by David seemed to be one *long since past*. If that *were* the case, then these Hebrews could have no new or fresh concern in it, and therefore could be in no danger of coming short of it. It was to remove such an objection, and to confirm what he had previously advanced, that the Apostle occupied himself in what follows, and this he does by a direct appeal to Psalm 95, showing from the proper signification of its words, from the time when it was written, and from the persons there addressed, that no other “rest” was there intended than what was here being proposed by him unto them, namely, the rest of God and His people in the Gospel.

The general argument insisted upon by the Apostle to support his design and establish his purpose, consists in an enumeration of all the various “rests” of God and His people mentioned in the Old Testament. From the consideration of them all, he proves that no other rest could be intended by the language of David in Psalm 95 than the rest of the Gospel, whereinto all who believe do now enter. This he arrives at, most logically, by a process of *elimination*. First, the rest “promised” (Heb. 4:1) in Psalm 95 was neither the rest of God from the works of creation, nor the Sabbath rest which ensued thereon (Heb. 4:4-6). Second, nor was it the rest of Canaan, which Joshua brought the people into (Heb. 4:7, 8). No, it was a spiritual rest which remained or subsisted for believers to enjoy now (vv. 8-10). We are now prepared to enter into detail.

In verse 3, three things are laid down. First, an assertion, which comprises the whole intendment of the Apostle in this passage: “For we which have believed do enter into rest.” Second, a proof of that assertion from the words of the Psalmist: “As He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest,” or as the Psalm reads, “They should not enter into My rest” (95:11). Third, an elliptical entrance into a full confirmation of his assertion and the due application of his proof produced unto what he had designed: “although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.” Now that “rest” which believers enter through faith in Christ (cf. John 16:33) is first and primarily the spiritual rest of God, and is not to be restricted unto the eternal rest in Heaven, though that will be the fruition of it. God rests in Christ (Isa. 42:1) and in His people (Zeph. 3:17).

“As I have sworn in My wrath, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:3), or “that they should not enter into My rest.” How did those words contain a *confirmation* of what has been affirmed in the preceding clause? Two ways. First, by an axiom of logic. It is a well-known rule that unto immediate contraries contrary attributes may be certainly assigned, so that he who affirms the one at the same time denies the other, and he who denies that one affirms the other. For instance, if I say it is “day,” I also affirm it is *not* “night.” If, then, those who believed not entered not into God's rest, then it logically follows that those who believe *do* enter into it. Second, theologically: according to the analogy of faith—every threatening also includes a promise, and every promise has also the nature of a threat in it.

“Although the works were finished from the foundation of the world” (v. 3). In those words the Apostle began his answer to an anticipated objection against what he had asserted of the Gospel rest. Now all “rest” presupposes *labour*, consequently each several “rest” of God must have some work preceding it. So it was, first, with His rest in Genesis 2:2 that was preceded by the six days of creation. This the Apostle at once refers to in verse 4, “For He spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did

rest the seventh day from all His works.” Now as Owen so convincingly pointed out, God's rest here is not spoken of absolutely, with respect to Himself only, but rather with reference to an appointed rest that ensued thereon for His creatures to rest in with Him, for this is the Apostle's scope all through this passage. Hence he refers us back to the whole passage from which he quotes (Gen. 2:2, 3): and there we learn that God not only rested on the seventh day, but “blessed” it for the rest of man. Thus he first treats of the Sabbath in relation to the state of man under the law of nature.

“And in this place again, If they shall enter into My rest” (Heb. 4:5). The “in this” has reference to Psalm 95, which he is here expounding and applying to the case of the Hebrews. The word “again” emphasizes the fact that the Apostle is now alluding to the *second* “rest” of God and the proposal He made unto His People of their entering into it. At the finish of His work, God rested the seventh day and blessed it for a day of rest unto His creatures. And “again,” on another occasion, He spoke of “My rest.” What that “other occasion” was, Psalm 95 tells us: it was when Israel was in the Wilderness (Psa. 95:8). God had finished another series of miraculous works when He brought His people out of Egypt and conducted them through the Red Sea. Then He took them into covenant relationship with Himself (at Sinai), renewed the Law, and set before them the rest of Canaan. That a spiritual rest was then proposed unto Israel is clear from the Apostle's changing the Psalmist's, “they should not enter into My rest” (95:11) to, “If they shall enter”—the exclusion of some definitely implied the entrance of others into God's rest if they complied with His terms.

At the risk of being wearisome, but for the benefit of those desiring to really understand this passage, we will here summarize the force of the Apostle's reasoning so far as we have yet gone. God's rest was tendered unto and entered into by some (viz., believers) from the foundation of the world. It must therefore be another rest which the Psalmist (so long after) spoke of, and which the descendants of Abraham were afresh invited to enter into, as later in his discussion the Apostle more clearly proves. And they who deny any Sabbath rest from *the beginning* remove all foundation for Paul's discourse: had there been no rest from the foundation of the world what need for him to prove that the “rest” mentioned in Psalm 95 was *not* the original one, if there had been none such? The very object of the Apostle in again referring to Psalm 95 was to show that the “rest” mentioned by David was not that which was appointed from the beginning of the world, but a much *later* one.

What that second and later “rest” was, we have defined in the last paragraph but one, as the rest of Canaan—not merely external relief from their wilderness wandering, but an entrance into the spiritual rest of God. Ere proceeding further we give proof of this, for we will take nothing for granted. There was a rest of God under the Mosaic economy. The prayer about it was, “Arise, O LORD, into *Thy rest*, Thou and the ark of Thy strength” (Psa. 132:8)—the ark being the symbol and pledge of God's presence and rest. This “rest” of God followed upon the completion of His mighty works in bringing Israel into Canaan. After the establishment of His worship therein, He said of it, “This is *My rest* forever: here will I dwell” (Psa. 132:14)!

God having entered into His rest in like manner as formerly (upon the finishing of His glorious work), two things ensued thereon. First, the people were invited and encouraged to enter into the rest of God. This the Apostle treats of in Hebrews 3 and 4: their entrance into that rest being conditioned upon their faith and

obedience. Although some of them came short of it, because of their unbelief, yet others entered into it under the leadership of Joshua. Second, this rest, both of God and of His people, was expressed by appointing a day of rest which was a token and pledge of God's present rest in His instituted worship, and was designed as a means in the solemn observance of that worship to further their entrance into His rest eternally. Hence the seventh day was to Israel a special sign that He was their God and they His people.

While it is true that the Day appointed in connection with this second rest of God was the same as the first one, viz., the seventh, yet it was now established upon new considerations and unto new ends. The time for the change of the day of rest was not yet come, for the work of God in bringing Israel into covenant-relationship with Himself, conducting them into Canaan, and instituting His worship among them, was but preparatory to yet another work and rest. The Covenant of Works, to which the original Sabbath was annexed, being not yet abolished (but only modified), therefore the Day of rest was not then changed.

Now to proceed. The Apostle goes on to show that Psalm 95 prophetically intimated that there was yet to be a *third* rest of God—which His people were to enter into—an especial rest under the Messiah, which he here proposed unto the Hebrews and exhorted them to enter into (Heb. 4:11). In this third state there was to be a particular condition of rest, distinct from and superior to each of those which had gone before. To the constitution thereof, three things were required: some signal work of God completed, whereon He entered into His rest. Second, a spiritual rest ensuing therefrom, for them that believe to enter into. Third, a new day of rest to express this rest of God, and to be a pledge of our entering therein. These things we now further inquire into.

“Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief” (v. 6). Here the Apostle draws a conclusion which is incisive, but observe carefully it is based on the principle that a promise is included in every conditional threatening, for unless the word of the Psalmist, “they should not enter into My rest” may also be (deductively) understood as, “if they shall enter,” that is, they shall providing they meet the conditions, there would be no force whatever in saying, “that some *must* enter.” They who entered not in because of unbelief or “disobedience” were the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt. The rest of Canaan which they missed was typical of the present rest of believers in Christ.

“Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *Today*, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (v. 7). In this verse the Apostle confirms what he had just affirmed about a new rest and a new Day of Rest remaining for the people of God to enter into, and which rest he proposes unto them. After the institution of the Sabbath rest at the beginning, and after the proposal of the rest of Canaan to Israel in the Wilderness, God, in addition (“Again”), limited or designed and determined another particular rest and “day,” which was neither of the former, namely, that of *the Gospel*. It is to be carefully noted that in this verse the Apostle expressly *changes his terms*: God had “limited” or “defined” not only a “certain” or “particular” rest, but a DAY, because, it was Paul's design to show that God had determined not only another (a third) “rest,” but also *another* “day” as a pledge of this new rest.

The force of his argument in verse 7 is taken from *the time when* this “day” was limited or determined. Had those words of David (in Psa. 95) been uttered by Moses just before Israel entered the typical rest of

Canaan, they might have been thought to pertain thereunto and to have contained in them an exhortation unto Israel as that season. But instead, it was “after so long a time,” namely, 500 years after Moses, that God gave this message through the Psalmist. Consequently it *must* have related and referred to some other “rest” than Canaan, and some other “day” than the Jewish Sabbath. Therefore, there is still a promise remaining of entering into this (third) rest of God, unto which we must take heed that we come not short of it by unbelief and disobedience.

“For if Jesus [Joshua] had given them rest, then would He not afterward have spoken of *another day*” (v. 8). In this verse the Apostle removes a possible objection and gives further confirmation of his argument, by a particular application of it unto the point before him. That which he still insists upon is, his principal assertion from the words of David, namely, the rest prepared and proposed in the Gospel unto believers. To this the Hebrews might object: Although the people who came out of Egypt entered not into the promised rest of God, yet the next generation did so under Joshua—why then propose this rest unto us, and warn against our danger of missing it? This objection is conclusively set aside by showing that God in David proposed “*another day*” of rest unto Israel centuries *after* Joshua, and as no new Sabbath was appointed in David's time, his words must be understood prophetically. Hence there *was* a rest proposed unto the Hebrews (and so us) and “another day” to memorialize it.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] unto the people of God” (v. 9). The Apostle here shows, in a brief summary, what had been conclusively established in his whole disquisition: three things indubitably followed. First, that a Divine and spiritual rest remains for the people of God to enter into and enjoy with Him. Second, that a Sabbath day to memorialize it, and be a means of entering into that rest, abides under the Gospel. Third, that it must of necessity be “*another day*,” a different one from that which obtained under the old covenant. It is to be duly noted that the Apostle did not say “there awaiteth” or “there is yet to be a Sabbath keeping,” but “there remaineth.” The reference is not to something future, but what is present. This word is used in the same sense when applied negatively to the system of sacrifices: “There *remaineth* no more sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26). How striking that this occurs in Hebrews! The Levitical priesthood has been set aside, the temple is no more, Judaism is abolished: but a Sabbath remains!

We wish to call special attention to the fact that in verse 9 Paul again deliberately *changed his terms*. The word for “rest” here in verse 9 is an entirely different one from that used in verses 1, 3, 5, 8, 10. It is “Sabbatismos” which speaks for itself: the R.V. has, “There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of God.” It was a word coined by the Apostle to express the whole sense of that with which he was treating: that is, to denote both the rest itself and the appointment of “another day” as a token of it—it signifies our rest in God and the Day which is the pledge of it. And this Sabbatismos remaineth—the word “remaineth” signifies to be left after others have been withdrawn (as the primitive and Judaical Sabbaths have), to continue unchanged, as the Christian Sabbath will unto the end of the world. Here, then, is a plain, positive, unequivocal declaration by the Spirit of God: “there *remaineth* therefore a Sabbath keeping.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous, for this is addressed to the “holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1). Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says there is no Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the New Testament Scriptures. We must leave for next month the closing verses of this most important passage.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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October, 1939

### A TENDER HEART.

Because thine heart was tender” (2 Kings 22:19). We have already considered the circumstances and significance of these words last month. Let us now proffer a few remarks upon how a tender heart may be *preserved*. This is a matter of great importance, for though such a most desirable possession be obtained as a sovereign gift from God, yet it can only be *retained* by much diligence on our part. This should scarcely need any arguing, yet hyper-Calvinists are likely to demur, supposing that an insistence upon Christian responsibility is the same thing as crying up creature ability. But does not the natural shadow forth the spiritual here, too? Is it not a fact with which we are all familiar that the more “tender” any object or creature be, the more care and cultivation it requires?

“Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23). This must put an end to all quibbling on the part of objectors: where God speaks there must be an end of all strife. And diligence, great and constant diligence, is required on our part if a tender heart is to be preserved. How? In what directions? First, by guarding against everything which is hostile to it. To be more specific: it is sin which hardens the heart. In exact proportion as sin obtains dominion over us, do we steal ourselves against God. And it is just here that our accountability comes in: “Awake to righteousness, and sin not” (1 Cor. 15:34). Thought we cannot impart a tender heart, we can certainly impair one. “Harden not your hearts” was the Lord's call to His people of old, and to us also today; and if we are to comply therewith we must fear, hate, and resist *sin*.

Sin is insidious. Scripture speaks of “the deceitfulness of sin”(Heb. 3:13). If we are not on our guard, it

will steal upon us unawares; unless we are wide awake and alert to the danger, sin will overcome us like the fumes of a deadly gas. That is why the Lord bids us “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation” (Matt. 26:41). Yes, watch as well as pray, and pray as well as watch. We all know what happened to Peter because he failed so to do, and his case is recorded as a solemn warning for us. “Enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away” (Prov. 4:14, 15). Notice carefully how the same prohibition is iterated and re-iterated again and again in these verses. It is the first approach of sin we most need to resist. It is by making conscience of its earliest stirrings within that a tender heart is preserved.

Every Christian will readily allow that sin is insidious, but it is one thing to recognize this in theory and quite another to be regulated by it in practice. All will agree that one of the most effective means of victory over sin is to steadfastly refuse its first advances; yet the fact remains that few do so. It is at this very point we must take our stand if a tender heart is to be retained. But how? By guarding against carnality. Things indifferent become a snare if they are not kept within due bounds. That which is lawful is not always expedient. An immoderate use of the creature will bind chains upon us which are not easily snapped. Inordinate affection for those nearest to us will sap true spirituality. Beware, then, of setting your love too much upon mere *things* or creatures.

Nothing will keep the heart tender so much as cultivating the spirit of filial awe. Alas that this is now so rarely insisted upon. “The fear of the LORD is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13). Necessarily so, for God is ineffably holy, and where He is revered sin is loathed. “By the fear of the LORD men depart from evil” (Prov. 16:6), for two cannot walk together except they be agreed. The more concerned I am not to displease my Master, the more shall I eschew that which He forbids. “Be thou in the fear of the LORD all the day long” (Prov. 23:17), for “Happy is the man that feareth *always*” (Prov. 28:14). We must strive to be in the fear of God not only in the first hour of devotion, but throughout the day. The more we live in the conscious realization that the eyes of the Holy One are upon us, the more will our hearts be kept truly tender.—A.W.P.

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### **MORTIFIED EYES.**

“Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity: quicken Thou me in Thy way” (Psa. 119:37). The first request is for the removing of impediments to obedience, the other for addition of new degrees of grace. These two are fitly joined, for they have a natural influence upon one another: unless we turn away our eyes from vanity, we shall soon contract a deadness of heart. When our affections are alive to other things, they are dead to God; therefore the less we let loose our hearts to these things, the more lively and cheerful the work of obedience. On the other side, the more the vigour of grace is renewed and the habits of it quickened into actual exercise, the more is sin mortified and subdued.

1. It therefore concerns those that would walk with God to have their eyes turned away from worldly things. He that would be quickened, carried out with life and vigour in the ways of God, must first be mortified, die unto sin. Speaking of the fruits of Christ's death, the Apostle mentioned death unto sins before life unto righteousness (1 Peter 2:25). If any would live with Christ, first they must learn to die unto sin. It is impossible for sin and grace to thrive in the same subject.

2. One great means of mortification is *guarding the senses*—eyes and ears, taste and touch—that they may not betray the heart. I put it so general because the man of God that is so solicitous about his eyes would not be careless of his ears and other senses. We must watch on all sides. When an assault is made on a city, if one gate be open it is as good as if all were. The ingress and egress of sin is by the *senses*, and much of our danger lies there. There are many objects that agree with our distempers, and by them insinuate

themselves into the soul, and therefore things long since seemingly dead will soon revive again and recover life and strength. There are no means to keep the heart unless we keep the eye. In every creature Satan has laid a snare for us, to steal away our hearts and affections from God. The senses are so ready to receive these objects from without to wound the heart, for they are as the heart is. If the heart be poisoned with sin, and became a servant to it, so are the senses of our bodies “weapons of unrighteousness” (Rom. 6:13). Objects have an impression upon them answerable to the temper and affections of the soul, and what it desires they pitch upon; and therefore if we let the senses wander, the heart will take fire.

3. Above all senses *the eye* must be guarded. First, because it is the noblest sense, given us for high uses. There is not only a natural eye to inform us of things profitable and hurtful for the natural man, but a *spiritual* use to set before us those objects that may stir us and raise our minds to heavenly meditations. By beholding the perfection of the creature we may admire the more eminent perfection of Him that made them: “the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth His handiwork” (Psa. 19:1). “For the invisible things of Him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhood” (Rom. 1:20). The perfections of the creature are to draw us to God, and its defects to drive us from themselves. The eye, as it is used, will either be a help or a snare: either it will let in the sparks of temptation, or enkindle the fire of true devotion. These are the windows which God has placed in the top of the building, that man from there may contemplate God's works and take a prospect of Heaven.

Second, because the eyes have a great influence upon the *heart* either to good or evil, but chiefly to evil. In this corrupt state of man, by looking we come to liking, and are brought inordinately to affect what we do behold. “Seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye used to go a whoring” (Num. 15:39). “If my step hath turned out of the way, and my heart walk after mine eyes” (Job 31:7). These are the spies of the heart—brokers to bring it and the temptation together; the eye sees, and then by gazing the heart lusts, and the body acts the transgression. It is more dangerous to *see* evil than to hear it.—Thomas Manton, 1660.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *7. Its Christianization.*

In these particular articles upon the Christianization of the Sabbath we are seeking to establish (from Scripture) two things. First, that there is a *Sabbath* appointed by God for this dispensation—a *Christian Sabbath* for His people to keep holy and enjoy. Second, that this Christian Sabbath is to be observed upon “another day” of the week than the one celebrated throughout the Old Testament era. The one passage in the New Testament which above all others most conclusively proves both of these points is Hebrews 4:8-10, and therefore are we seeking to give a careful exposition of these verses and their setting. We would ask those who are really interested and concerned to re-read at this stage our article in the October issue, and then proceed with this.

Last month we got as far as Hebrews 4:9 which expressly declares, “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God.” Nothing could be simpler, nothing less ambiguous than that verse. The striking thing is that it occurs in the very Epistle whose theme is the superiority of *Christianity* over Judaism—a theme developed by showing the superiority of Christ (the Center and Life of Christianity) over angels, Adam, Moses, Joshua, Aaron, and the whole Levitical economy. It is an Epistle addressed to “holy brethren partakers of the heavenly calling” (3:1). Therefore it cannot be denied that Hebrews 4:9 is referring directly to *the Christian Sabbath*. Hence, we solemnly and emphatically declare that the man who says that there is *no* Christian Sabbath takes direct issue with the *New Testament Scriptures*.

“There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God” (Heb. 4:9). In this, and the following verse, the Apostle evidences the perfect analogy between the several rests of God and His people discoursed of in this chapter. First, at the beginning there was the creative work of God and His resting therefrom, which made way for a rest for His creatures in Himself and His worship by the contemplation of the works He had made. A day was specially assigned for that purpose—that was the primitive Sabbatismos. Second, there was a great work of God in bringing Israel out of Egypt and the establishing of His people in Canaan, which made way for their entering into His rest and worship, a Sabbath day being appointed to express both the one and the other—this was the Mosaic Sabbatismos.

So now, under the Gospel, there is a Sabbath comprised of all these. As we shall see there was another and greater work of God, and a rest of His own ensued thereon. On that work is founded the promise of rest spiritual and eternal to those who do believe, and the determination of a new day expressive of the one and the other. This is the Christian Sabbatismos. That the redemptive work of Christ has not only secured this spiritual rest to His people, but has also necessitated and resulted in *a new Sabbath* to celebrate it appears from two things in the Apostle's discourse. First, by his referring to our Gospel rest by the name of DAY (v. 8). Second, from his coining of this term “Sabbatismos” to express both our spiritual rest and the Sabbath-keeping which memorializes the same.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works as God did from His” (v. 10). Plain and simple as these words are, yet they have been grievously wrested by most of the commentators. They are generally regarded as referring to *believers* entering into the rest of God, through their believing of the Gospel. But there are two considerations which expose the error of this view. First, the verse does *not* read, “*they* who enter into His rest,” but “*He* that is entered into.” Second, if the reference was to believers, *what* are the “works” from which they cease? Their sins, say some; their legalistic efforts to win God's approval, say others; their sorrows and sufferings, from which they shall rest in Heaven, say yet others. But *how* could they be said to rest from any such works, “AS God from His” own? It is utterly impossible to satisfactorily answer such a question. No, the verse speaks not of believers, but of *Christ*.

“For He that is entered into His rest, He also hath ceased from His own works, as God did from His.” Here the Apostle concludes his argument by declaring that the “rest” which remains for believers to enter into (4:3), and the new day appointed by God for this dispensation (4:9), have a new and special foundation, which the previous rests and days had no interest or concern in, namely, that the Author of it ceased from His own works and entered into His rest. Proofs that this verse refers *to Christ* are many. First, its opening “For,” which denotes that the Apostle now indicates whence it is there is a new Sabbatismos remaining for the people of God. He had before shown there could be no such rest but what was founded upon the works of God. Such a foundation this new rest must have, and does have. It is the work of Him by whom the Church is builded: Hebrews 3:3, 4.

Second, the change of number in the pronoun from the plural to the singular intimates the same thing. In Hebrews 4:1-3 the Apostle had used “us” and “we,” but here, verse 10, he says, “*He* that is entered.” This is the more noticeable because in the verse immediately preceding he had mentioned “the people of God.”

That it is *not they* who are here in view further appears from the fact that they never cease from their works while left in this world. No other reason can possibly be given for this change of number except that a single person is here expressed. Third, note it is not simply said of this person that, “He that is entered into rest” (as in vv. 3 and 8), but “into *His* rest” absolutely. God spoke of “My rest”; here He mentions “His rest”—Christ's rest!

Fourth, there is a direct parallel supplied by this verse between the works of the old creation and those of the new, which the Apostle is openly comparing together. 1. In the *Authors* of them: of the former it is said of God the Creator, He did “rest from all His works” (4:4). So “He (Christ) also hath ceased from His own.” 2. The *products* of the One and of the Other are mentioned: Their respective “works,” and there is a due proportion between them, each being creative and “very good.” 3. There is the *rest* of the One and of the Other, and these also have a proportion to one another. It should now be unmistakably plain to every impartial reader that it is the Person of Jesus Christ who is the subject spoken of in verse 10.

The blessed Person referred to, then, in verse 10 is the Lord Jesus, and none other—the Author of the new creation. This alone gives meaning to the causal conjunction: there is a Sabbatismos now for the people of God, FOR Christ is entered into His rest. What is denoted by His “rest” we must now inquire. This was certainly not His being in the grave. His body indeed rested there for a brief season, but that was no part of His *Mediatory* rest, as He is the Builder of His Church; and that for two reasons. First, His entombment was part of His *humiliation* (Isa. 53:9). Second, the separation of His soul and body was *penal*, a part of the sentence of the Law which He underwent, and hence Peter declares, “The pains of death” were not loosed until His resurrection (Acts 2:24).

Nor did Christ first enter into His rest at His ascension, rather was that an entrance into His *glory*, as in the full public manifestation of it. No, Christ's entrance into rest was in, by, and at His resurrection from the dead. For it was then and thereon He was freed from the power and service of the Law, being discharged from the debts of our sins. It was then and thereon that all prefigurations and predictions concerning the work of redemption were fulfilled. It was then and thereon that He received “the promise of the Spirit” (Acts 2:33), and the whole foundation of the Church of God was laid upon His Person. It was then and thereon that He was “declared to be the Son of God with power” (Rom. 1:4). God manifesting unto all that this was He of whom He said, “Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee” (Acts 13:33).

“Thus did the Author of the new creation, the Son of God, having finished His works, enter into His rest. And this was, as we all know, on the morning of the *first* day of the week. And hereby did He limit and determine the day for a sacred Sabbatical rest under the New Testament. For now was the old covenant (the Siniatic) utterly abolished, and therefore the day which was the pledge of the rest of God and man therein, was to be taken away. As the rest from the beginning of the world had its foundation from the works of God, and His rest which ensued thereon, which was determined unto the seventh day, because that was the day wherein God ceased from those works—which day continued under the legal administration of the covenant by Moses—so the rest of the Lord Christ is the foundation of our rest, which, changing the old covenant, and the day annexed unto it, He hath limited unto the *first* day of the week, whereon He ceased from His works and entered into His rest.

“Wherefore when the Lord Christ intended conspicuously to build His Church upon the foundation of His works and rest, by sending the Holy Spirit with His miraculous gifts upon the Apostles, He did it on *this day*: which was then among the Jews the feast of Pentecost. Then were the disciples gathered together with one accord, in the observance of the day signalized to them by His resurrection (Acts 2:1). And by this did their obedience receive a blessed confirmation, as well as their persons a glorious endowment with abilities for the work which they were immediately to apply themselves unto” (John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much in this and last month's article).

It remains for us to point out that the rest into which Christ entered is proposed unto His people in the Gospel. This is asserted in the precious verse and is here made manifest. “There remaineth therefore a rest [keeping of a Sabbath] to the people of God,” (Heb. 4:9) *because* Christ has entered into His rest. As the other rests—the one at the beginning of human history and the other at the beginning of the commonwealth of Israel—had their foundation in the works and rests of God, whereon a Day of rest was appointed for them to keep, so has this new rest a foundation in the works and rest of Christ—who has built all things and is *God* (Heb. 3:3, 4), determining a day for our use in and by that whereon He entered into His rest, which is the first day of the week.

Before giving a brief word on verse 11, let us refer to what may present a difficulty unto a few. It should be quite clear there is a Christian Sabbath, a Sabbath appointed for this dispensation. Some may be ready to say, Yes, “for the people of God” (v. 9), but how about unbelievers? First, we answer, we know of nothing in Scripture which intimates that God requires unbelievers to celebrate the first day of the week as a memorial of our Lord's resurrection, for Christ means nothing to them. But second, they *are* commanded to keep the Sabbath holy unto God their Creator and Ruler. The original Covenant of Works has never been repealed, and all out of Christ are under it. Though the day of Sabbath observance is changed, God requires all alike, believers and unbelievers, to abstain from all secular employment on the Sabbath and keep the day holy unto Himself.

“Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Heb. 4:11). First, it is to be noted that the Apostle does not here use the term “Sabbatismos” (as in v. 9), but, “katapausis” as in verses 1, 3, 5, etc. This shows that he now returns to his principal exhortation—the reader will be helped on the passage as a whole if he places verses 4-10 in a parenthesis, thus connecting verse 11 with verse 3. In the opening verse of the chapter Paul has said, “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it,” and here he now makes known how that “fear” is to exert itself. It is not a “fear” of dread or doubt, but is such a reverential respect unto the Divine threatenings and promises as would stir up its possessors unto all diligence to avoid the one and inherit the other.

The utmost of our endeavours and efforts are required in order to our obtaining an entrance into the rest of Christ. We are to “labour” or give the greatest possible diligence thereto. Men are in real earnest and spend their strength in striving after the bread which perishes; the same intentness and zeal are required in our seeking the Bread of Life. He who teaches men that an entrance into spiritual and eternal rest is a thing plain, easy, and suited to nature, does but delude and deceive them. To mortify sin, deny self, cut off right hands, endure all sorts of afflictions and persecutions—are painful, difficult, and attended with many

hardships. The future state of the Christian is one wholly of rest, but his present state is a *mixed* one, partly of rest and partly of labour—labour against sin, rest in the love and grace of God.

Having now gone carefully through our passage let us see what we have learned from it. First, Hebrews 4 opens with a pointed warning taken from the case of the unbelieving Israelites of old (Heb. 3:16-18). Second, but though those Israelites failed to enter into it, yet there is a rest of God proposed unto us in the Gospel, and which believers enter into (v. 3). Third, this led the Apostle to take up the different “rests” of God and His people: the Edenic, Mosaic, and Messianic (vv. 4-10). Fourth, in leading up to his climax the Apostle throws the emphasis not so much on the “rest” as on the DAY appointed to celebrate it. In verse 7 he declares that God (prophetically) limited or determined “a certain day.” In verse 8 he expressly refers to “another day” which supplies proof that a *different one* from the old seventh day is now instituted. In verse 9 this other day and the rest it memorializes is definitely designated a “Sabbatismos” or “keeping of a Sabbath.” In verse 10 he shows *why* the Sabbath day had been changed: because it was on that day Christ entered into His rest.

Well, then, may we with the utmost confidence exclaim with the Psalmist, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it*” (118:24). “We observe the day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer” (C. H. Spurgeon). It should be pointed out that the passage we have last quoted is part of a remarkable prophecy, which set forth both the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus—“the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow.” The passage is quoted in the New Testament no less than six times, being expressly applied to the Saviour. First, He is seen as “the Stone which the builders refused,” and then as “became the Head of the corner” (Psa. 118:2).

And how could that “Stone,” contemptuously trodden underfoot by men, become “the Head of the corner”? How indeed except by *being raised!*? It was by His triumph over death that Christ became the Head of the corner—a “corner” is when two walls meet together, and in resurrection Christ became Head of both believing Jews and believing Gentiles! The Psalmist added, “This is the LORD'S doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes” (Psa. 118:23). And then follows, “*This is the day which the LORD hath made.*” What could be clearer? How perfectly it accords with Hebrews 4:9, 10! That “day” was Divinely “made” to memorialize Christ's victory over the grave: God has “made it remarkable, made it holy, has distinguished it from all other days: it is therefore called the Lord's Day, because it bears His image and superscription” (Matthew Henry).

And so it is: the Christian Sabbath is specifically designated “the *Lord's Day*” in Revelation 1:10. It is called such because it owes its pre-eminence to the Lord's institution and authority. By taking to Himself the title of “the Lord of the Sabbath” (Mark 2:28), Christ clearly intimated His authority to determine which day of the week a Sabbath rest was to be observed by His people, and by ceasing from His works and entering into His rest on the *first* day of the week, He has “limited” this one for us. Those who are determined to close their eyes to all this evidence and get rid of the first-day Sabbath at any price, wrest these words in Revelation 1:10 by saying they signify “the Day of the Lord” when He comes in judgment. But the immediate context is dead against them: all that follows from 1:10 to the end of chapter 3 shows that this opening vision respected present and *not future* things. Moreover, the Greek is different from 2

Peter 3:10! “The Lord's Supper” (1 Cor. 11:20) memorializes His death; “the Lord's Day” celebrates His resurrection.

Here is a summary of the reasons why Christians should observe the Sabbath on the first day of the week. First, because that day was clearly anticipated by Old Testament typology—the striking things connected with “the *eighth* day.” Second, because the New Covenant necessitated a new Day of rest to signify the old covenant was abrogated. Third, because the honour and glory of *Christ* required it: on the day specially appointed for Divine worship, God would now have us occupied with His risen and exalted Son. Fourth, His own example bears witness thereto: His repeated meetings with His disciples (John 19) and His sending the Spirit on that day (Acts 2:1) set His imprimatur upon it. Fifth, because the early Church so celebrated it (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2). There is not a single recorded instance in the New Testament of the saints meeting together for worship, after Christ's resurrection, on any other day but on the *first* of the week! Sixth, because we are expressly told that God has “limited” or determined “*another* day” (Heb. 4:9) than the old one, and that, because Christ then rose from the dead (v. 10). Seventh, because we are Divinely assured that, in view of the raising up of the rejected Stone to be the Head of the corner, “This is *the day* which the Lord hath made” (Psa. 118:24), and therefore is it called “the *Lord's Day*” in the New Testament (Rev. 1:10).—A.W.P.

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### **A TENDER HEART.**

“Because thine heart was tender” (2 Kings 22:19). What a desirable thing is a tender heart. How earnestly we should aspire after one. And when such has been graciously bestowed upon us, what diligence we should exercise in seeking to preserve the same. The tenderness of Josiah's heart was precious in the sight of the Lord, and in consequence thereof his prayers were answered, as the remainder of our opening text declares. There is nothing like a tender heart, my reader, for obtaining the ear of the Lord. A tender heart is one which is responsive to the voice of God, and unless we possess this how can we expect Him to hear our calls? A tender heart is the only one which truly honours God, as it is the only one which ensures our growth in grace. How deeply important, then, is the question, Have you, have I, really a tender heart? May we be enabled to answer truthfully.

In the last two issues we pointed out some of the principal characteristics of a tender heart, and also sought to indicate those duties which must be performed if we are to retain this valuable possession. But it is probable that not a few of our readers would prefer for us to tell them how a tender heart may be *recovered*. They are already persuaded of the great excellence of this spiritual treasure, and they also perceive clearly what is necessary in order to retain it. What grieves them is that they are conscious of guilty failure in safeguarding this Divine gift. They are sensible that the fine gold has become dim, that little foxes have spoiled their vines, that their conscience is no longer so sensitive as it once was, that they do not respond so readily to the motions of God's Spirit; that much hardness now resides in their hearts.

It is sadly true that a tender heart may be lost: not absolutely so, but relatively; not permanently, but temporarily. But sadder still is the fact that many who have suffered this deprivation are unconscious of it. It is with them as it was with Ephraim of old: “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he *knoweth it not*; yea, gray hairs are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not” (Hosea 7:9). They may still attend the means of grace and perform their outward devotions, but their hearts are not in them. They may still be respected by their fellow-Christians and regarded as in a healthy spiritual state, while in reality they are backsliders. Sights from which they once shrank appall them no longer. Things which used to exercise their conscience do so no more. The standard at which they formerly aimed is now regarded as too strict and severe.

Said the Apostle to the Galatians, “Ye *did* run well, who (or “what”) hath hindered you?” (5:7). What are the things which destroy tenderness of heart? Ungodly companions is one. Satan will tell the young Christian that he or she may keep old friends and suffer no loss, but God says, “Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33). Friendship with worldlings will soon have a paralyzing influence upon true spirituality. Prayerlessness is another thing which speedily affects the heart. Unless a close fellowship with God be maintained—and that is impossible if the Throne of Grace is neglected—coldness and hardness will soon steal upon us. Equally so will a neglect of the Word. This will not necessarily mean the omission of reading so many chapters each day, but the absence of actually communing with God therein. The spirit of hypocrisy, pretending to be what we are not, hardens—for guile and tenderness are incompatible.

Yes, a tender heart may be lost, as truly as first love may be left (Rev. 2:4). Can it be regained? Yes, though not as easily as it may be hardened. How? First, by warming afresh at the fire of God's love. This is ever the most effectual means of removing hardness of heart. What was it that melted and broke you down at your first conversion? Was it not a sense of the Divine grace and a sight of Christ's dying love? And nothing is so calculated to soften the backslider: it is “the goodness of God” which leads to repentance (Rom. 2:4). What was before David when he commenced his contrite confession? This: the Lord's “lovingkindness” and the “multitude of His tender mercies” (Psa. 51:1). When was it that Peter went out and wept bitterly? Was it not when the Saviour “turned and looked upon him” (Luke 22:61)?

Was it not the *sorrow* which Peter saw in that look—a sorrow which issued from love for him—which broke his heart?! The Lord had given him every proof that he was dear unto Him, and how had Peter requited that love? And has not the Lord given you, my brother, my sister, abundant evidence that you are precious in His sight? Did He deem any sacrifice too great to make atonement for your sins? Has He not favoured you above millions of your fellows in bringing you to a saving knowledge of the Truth? Has He not bestowed the Holy Spirit upon you? Has He not borne with your dullness with infinite patience? Can you dwell upon these things with unmoved heart? Surely not. Seek unto Him, then, and your coldness and hardness will indeed be thawed.

Second, by genuine contrition. As it is the allowance of sin which hardens the heart, so it is sorrow for sin which softens it. Hence, when the Lord admonishes the one who has left his first love, His word is, “Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). First, “Remember *therefore* from whence thou art fallen,” which looks back to the previous verse. Call to mind

the happy fellowship you once enjoyed with the eternal Lover of your soul, when He found delight in you, and your own heart was satisfied. Consider “from *whence* thou art fallen”—no longer leaning on His bosom, but having entered a course which both displeases and dishonours Him. Unless this produces godly sorrow in you, nothing else will, and it is godly sorrow which “worketh repentance” (2 Cor. 7:10). Take a leaf out of the copybook of the prodigal son: arise, forsake the far country, return to your Father, and pour out your griefs into His welcoming ear.

Third, by the exercise of faith. “And do the first works” (Rev. 2:5). What was the first work you did when you originally came to God in Christ as an empty-handed and contrite sinner? Was it not to cast yourself upon His mercy, to lay hold of His promises, to trust in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning blood? Well, the same remedy is available now. Did not David cry, “*Create* in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10)?—deal with me now as Thou did at the first! And was he not able to say, “He restorest my soul” (Psa. 23:3)? Precious promises are recorded in the Word which exactly suit your case: “Return, ye backsliding children, and I will heal your backslidings” (Jer. 3:22). “I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely” (Hosea 14:4). Make these promises your own, plead them before God, and count upon Him making them good in your own case.

In conclusion, a word or two on some of the *evidences* of a tender heart. We mention one or two of these so that writer and reader may *test* himself by them. Is your heart affected by the present state of Christendom? Are you made to sigh and cry, “for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof” (Ezek. 9:4)? Is your experience, in some measure at least, that “Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake Thy Law” (Psa. 119:53)? “Mine eye shall weep sore and run down with tears, because the Lord's flock is carried away captive” (Jer. 13:17)—is that how you feel? Again—“I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision” (Acts 26:19): do you respond to the motions of God's Spirit? Finally, do you mourn over your own hardness and grieve over your callousness? *These* are some of the manifestations of a tender heart. A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1939

### LAST THINGS LAST.

We opened the year by writing upon “First things First,” so it seems appropriate that we should offer a few remarks upon Last things in this closing issue of 1939. The subject suggested by this title could be dealt with in various ways. We might, for example, consider that procrastinating tendency of fallen human nature to put off till later things which ought to be seriously attended to now. *Death* was the last thing in the experience of the countless millions whose bodies now lie in the cemeteries: how many of them were prepared to pass out of time into Eternity? Like we, they knew that their life span would be but a comparatively short one at best. Yet, like most of our generation, it is greatly to be feared the majority of them lived as though they were going to continue here indefinitely, with plenty of time before them for preparing to meet their God. Here is a case where last things must not be left to the last. “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would *consider* their latter end!” (Deut. 32:29).

Or, we might well dwell on the fact that the closing days of another year call for a solemn *review* of the months now behind us: how far we have redeemed the time, or to what extent we have trifled it away. “Thou shalt *remember* all the way which the LORD thy God led thee” (Deut. 8:2). We should be humbled at the recollection of how frequently we grumbled because His way was not the one we desired. We should judge ourselves unsparingly because we so often lagged behind, and sought to turn aside into forbidden bypaths. We should ponder the amazing grace of God in condescending *to lead* us across this trackless desert, and think, too, of His infinite forbearance in *continuing* to lead those so ungrateful and intractable. We should praise Him for having kept us in the Narrow Way, which we had certainly forsaken

had we been left to follow the bent of our own evil lusts. And we should return fervent thanks that we are now a year's march nearer our Heavenly Home.

Again, we might consider how this order of last things last is now being so extensively *displaced* in the modern world. In 1 Timothy 2, where the Holy Spirit issues the command, “Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection. But I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence” (vv. 11, 12), He points out, “for Adam was *first* formed, *then* Eve” (v. 13). Headship was therefore given to the man (1 Cor. 11:3). In the church and in the home the man and not the woman is to bear rule (1 Peter 3:6). But more and more this Divine order is being defied, and those who should be in subjection are taking the lead, the last (in the order of creation) insisting they should be first. The harvest we are beginning to reap from this evil sowing is indeed tragic: seen in the unruliness and selfishness of the rising generation.

But it is quite another instance of this turning of things topsy-turvy against which we would here protest—one that seems to have escaped the notice of many—or at any rate, one which is now being widely tolerated. We allude to the course being followed in so many quarters of the insistent pressure of *Prophecy* upon young converts. No sooner do a number of young people make a profession of salvation than (in many places) Bible study classes are organized for their benefit, where, for the most part, they are entertained with a lot of sensationalism, drawn from the politics of the present national and international situation, under the pretence that such is the accomplishment of Divine prediction. Things of vital moment are relegated to the rear, and matters of far less importance are pushed to the fore: doctrinal instruction, practical teaching, devotional incentives are largely ignored, and exciting disquisitions on future earthly events are substituted in their place.

In theological textbooks “Last things” (Eschatology) are rightly left for the closing chapters. We say “rightly,” for that is the order which God Himself has followed in the New Testament. Seven times over is the Apocalypse designated a “prophecy,” yet this is not placed at the beginning of the New Testament, but at *the end*—not that it is of least importance, but because we are not ready for it until we have digested the contents of the 26 books which precede it. It betokens gross spiritual incompetence, as well as carnal impudence, for self-styled Bible teachers to invert and so pervert this Divine order, and it results in harm and not good to those who sit under them. In our day-schools, teachers have too much sense than to turn their scholars to the last chapters of a textbook on grammar or arithmetic before they have thoroughly mastered the earlier ones. Alas, that the children of this world are so often wiser than the children of light.

Incalculable harm is being done by this putting of “Last things” first in the lives of young converts—this bringing before them the mysterious subjects of “the Revelation” before their characters have been formed after the example of Christ in the Gospels and by the precepts of the Epistles. Such a policy is as senseless and fatal as would be the teaching of infants how to fly an airplane. Instead of being exercised as to how they may please God, young converts are now having their minds diverted to how soon the battle of Armageddon is likely to be waged—a matter about which no one on earth has the slightest inkling. Instead of seeking a fuller knowledge of the Divine will for their own daily lives, babes in Christ are being occupied with profitless speculations as to how far Bolshevism and Fascism correspond to the “clay” and “iron” of Daniel 2:41. Instead of being instructed to seek a closer conformity to the image of Christ, they

are puzzling their poor brains over the number and image of the Antichrist. Instead of giving themselves to earnest prayer for the revival of vital holiness, they are dotting upon a “revived Roman empire.”

Moreover, at least nine-tenths of what is now being given out upon the subject of “Last things” is but vain speculations. Russellites [Jehovah's Witnesses] and Adventists are capitalizing on political events by trading upon the credulity of the ignorant, and at the same time are fattening their purses at the expense of lovers of the sensational: but both blind leaders and blind victims all end in the Ditch. What is going to happen next among the Nations is no concern of those whose citizenship is in Heaven: our rest is not here, and therefore it is the part of wisdom to set our affection upon things above. God has given us “the Revelation” not to stimulate the spirit of curiosity, but to humble us into the dust over our ignorance. Any attempt to lift the veil of futurity is not only futile, but impious. Let those who are called to feed the flock of Christ see to it that they give them the nourishing milk of God's Word, and not the filthy water of current happenings in the world. Leave “Last things” until the last!—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *8. Its Observance.*

In previous articles it has been shown that the Sabbath was instituted in Eden, observed by the Patriarchs and renewed at Sinai—and that Israel's prosperity and enjoyment of God's blessings was to a large extent determined by their observance or non-observance of this Divine ordinance. Turning to the New Testament we have seen that Christ expressly affirmed the Sabbath was “made for man” and not for the Jews only, that He is “Lord of the Sabbath” and therefore invested with authority to determine which day of the week shall be sanctified as a holy rest. And we saw in Hebrews 4 the Apostle proves that “another day” than that which obtained under the old covenant has been appointed for its celebration during the Christian era—the first day suitably celebrating the Saviour's entrance into His mediatorial rest. This is demonstrated by the practice of the early Church (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1, 2).

We are now to consider the all-important matter of how the Sabbath is to be kept. The chief end of God's Word and of all instruction therein is that the doctrinal principles which it enunciates may direct us unto a performance suited thereto. The light which we receive from the Living Oracle lays upon us a binding obligation to walk accordingly. Doctrine must regulate deportment. This was the grand rule laid down by the Supreme Teacher: “If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them” (John 13:17). The design of our learning Scripture Truth is for us to obtain such an understanding thereof that conduct accordant therewith may be produced. Where there is knowledge without the corresponding discharge of duty, the truth is held “in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18), and then double is our guilt. Practice must conform to the

precept.

It is, then, to the practical side of our subject we now turn: may Divine wisdom be so granted us that we are preserved from going to an undue extreme either on the right hand or on the left. No one who is acquainted with human nature or who is conversant with the history and literature on this branch of our subject, can honestly doubt there is a real danger of failing to preserve the balance here—as everywhere. On the one hand care must be taken lest in our zeal for the sanctity and spirituality of the Sabbath we go to an excess in multiplying rules for its observance, and thereby fall into the Pharisaic error of rigour and excess. On the other hand, there is a far greater danger today of erring on the side of laxity and of accommodating the laws regulating this institution to the lusts of the flesh and yielding to the corrupt practices of an evil and adulterous generation.

The strict requirements of God's holiness must be insisted upon, no matter how the world scoffs at or opposes them. As these very lines are being written [1939] God is manifesting His displeasure at the increasing desecration of His holy rest-day by disturbing the rest of Christendom—those nations which have enjoyed most of the privileges of the Gospel being seriously threatened with war. And the blame for this widespread desecration rests first and chiefly upon the churches: by the banishing of the Law from its pulpits, by the feeble or total lack of protest to legislative bodies for letting down the bars and legalizing the profanation of the Lord's Day, and by the general worldliness of its members. It is therefore high time that Christian leaders should faithfully expound the Fourth Commandment and cease accommodating it to the perverse wills and ways of the ungodly.

Sad, indeed, is the declension in genuine piety. The foundations have been forsaken, standards have been lowered, the spirit of compromise has prevailed till now, "Truth is fallen in the streets." Nor can the apostasy be checked by temporizing the commands of God to the corrupt course of the world. Yet we must beware of *adding to* those commands. Said the Puritan Owen, "I will not deny but that there have been and are mistakes in this matter. Directions have been given, and that not by a few, for the observance of a day of holy rest, which either for the matter of them or the manner prescribed, have had no sufficient warrant or foundation in the Scriptures. For whereas some have made no distinction between the Sabbath as moral and as Mosaic, unless it be merely in the change of the day, they have endeavoured to introduce the whole practice required on the latter into the Lord's Day."

How is a happy medium in Sabbath observance to be obtained? What will preserve us from undue laxity on the one side, and unwarrantable severity on the other? Where shall we turn for that much-needed guidance which will deliver us from the grievous yoke of Pharisaical excess, and which will also prevent us from degenerating into the lawlessness of our Moderns? We have searched long and diligently for a satisfactory answer to this question, but (amid much that was helpful on other branches of our subject) have failed to meet with anything clear and definite. Personally our firm conviction is that we shall be kept from going wrong in this matter, if we, first, adhere strictly to the *letter* of the Fourth Commandment; and second, apply that commandment to the details of our lives in the *spirit* of the New Covenant.

It should be apparent that we have now arrived at the most important branch of our subject. Unless both writer and reader are genuinely and earnestly desirous of keeping the Sabbath in a manner which will be

pleasing to the Lord and beneficial to the soul, then all our previous efforts to prove that this Divine ordinance is binding upon us today, will avail little or nothing. But the task before us now is no easy one: our chief difficulty being the avoidance of too great editing on the one hand, and too much brevity on the other. We do not wish to extend these articles to the point of wearying our friends, yet we must not abbreviate so much that we withhold the help which is desired upon various problems that exercise not a few. Some have had no instruction upon Sabbath observance: others have been given so many rules to follow that a spirit of bondage has been engendered. We shall therefore endeavour to steer a middle course.

Taking Exodus 20:8-11 as our starting point, we note first that that which outstandingly characterizes this season is its *sacredness*: “Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” This is basic and foremost. It is “the Lord's Day,” being instituted for His honour and glory. God, by the appointing and blessing of it, has *made* this day: we, by the worship of Him and performance of spiritual exercises therein, are to keep it holy. And let it be carefully borne in mind that holiness pertains not only to external actions, but also and mainly to the spring from which they proceed, namely, the heart: unless we sanctify the Sabbath in our hearts, the performing of outward devotions will avail us nothing. As the other six days are concerned mainly with secular things, the seventh is to be consecrated unto spiritual ends. Holiness stands opposed not only to all that is *sinful*, but also to the use of such things (our time and energy) as are *commonly* employed.

“Remember the Sabbath *day* to keep it holy”: not a part thereof, but the whole of it. In all countries where Romanism dominates, its deluded votaries spend a part of the morning in religious exercises, and for the balance of the day give themselves up to feasting and pleasuring. Sad to say this evil is becoming more and more rife in Protestant circles: though we may not yet have gone to the same lengths of profanity as is general “on the Continent,” yet thousands in this land who attend some morning service, spend the afternoon and evening in making social calls on their friends, car riding, and other fleshly and worldly activities. It is this unholy mixture, this “lukewarmness”—being neither hot nor cold—which is so nauseating to the Lord. Because it is the Lord's Day, we rob Him of His due if we regard any part of it as ours.

The second thing we note in Exodus 20:8-11 is that the Sabbath is expressly affirmed to be a day of *rest*: “the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.” That prohibition is qualified (as the example and teaching of Christ made clear) at two points only: the doing of that which is really essential to life and health, and engaging in acts of love and mercy. Apart from those exceptions, all work and labour—be it manual or clerical, physical or mental—is Divinely forbidden. And this, as was pointed out in earlier articles, is a merciful provision of the Creator for His creatures. Continuous toil is injurious to our constitution. “The Sabbath was made for man,” for his well-being, because he needed one day of rest in each week. This law is as binding upon and holds good for the wife equally as for the husband, for the servant as much as his master, yea, for his beasts of burden too.

This law is as binding upon our private lives as upon our public, upon the way in which we conduct ourselves within the home as on the outside. It is just as real a profanation of the Holy Sabbath for a merchant to cast up his ledger or write business letters on that day, as for a farmer to go out and plow his fields or sow corn. So, too, is it equally sinful for his wife to prepare and cook elaborate meals on the

Lord's Day as it would be for her to do her weekly washing and ironing then. Nor can this be evaded—as many seem to suppose—by the mistress accompanying her husband to the morning service and leaving her daughter or maid to cook the biggest dinner of the week. Alas, in many homes, not only does the cook have no rest on the Lord's Day, but it is the heaviest one of the week for her.

Let us next point out that there is a positive side to the Fourth Commandment as well as a negative. Not only are we to abstain from all worldly business, but we are to be active in spiritual exercises. A day spent in idleness is not one which is kept holy. The Day of Rest is not to be one of indolence, but one of blessed and sacred diligence. Physical rest is necessary, but spiritual rest is yet more essential. In its higher aspect, true Sabbatical rest is the soul resting in the Lord. This is evident from the fact that the Sabbath is both an emblem and a pledge of the eternal rest of the saints, concerning which it is said “His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3), which means that they will be actively engaged in His worship. Inasmuch then as the duties of this day are eminently spiritual, they are such as lie beyond our own powers to perform, and therefore we must seek the aid of the Holy Spirit.

A third thing we should observe is that the Sabbath is to be a *season of rejoicing*: “This is the day which the LORD hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa. 118:24). The immediate context contains a grand Messianic prophecy, wherein the triumph of Christ was set forth. Under the figure of “the Stone,” He is viewed first, in His humiliation, as despised and rejected by men, as being refused by the builders. Next He is portrayed in His glorification, as owned and honoured of God, as being made “The Headstone of the corner.” The exaltation of Christ was in three stages: when He was raised from the tomb, when He ascended to Heaven, and when He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. “This is the LORD'S doing: it is marvellous in our eyes” (v. 23). The exaltation of Christ was wholly of the Lord: the product of His eternal counsel, the product of His mighty power; and it is the subject of never-ceasing wonderment to His redeemed.

“This is the day which the LORD hath made,” and therefore it is peculiarly and pre-eminently “the *Lord's* Day,” and so it is expressly denominated in Revelation 1:10. It is the day which the Lord made specially for this Christian dispensation, namely, the first of the week. It is the day which has been made forever memorable by loosing the Redeemer from the pains of death. It is now the day in which His people are to celebrate the Saviour's victory over the sepulchre. And therefore Christians must exclaim, “we will rejoice and be glad in it”: not only because of its appointment, but because of its occasion, for Christ's resurrection was both for His own honour and for our salvation. Holy mirth, then, should fill our hearts at this season: Sabbath days ought to be unto us as foretastes of Heaven itself. Then let us welcome each weekly return of it, and duly tune our hearts to show forth His praises therein.

The *order* of Truth in the passage last quoted, is the order we must observe if we are to enter experimentally therein. We shall be glad and rejoice in proportion as our hearts are truly occupied with the risen Redeemer and of our being risen in Him. As Spurgeon well put it, “What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious Leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to especially rejoice on the Sabbath: it is the queen of days,

and its hours should be clad in royal apparel of delight.”

What abundant cause have we for rejoicing therein! The resurrection of Christ marked the end of His inexpressible humiliation, and signaled the beginning of His unending glorification. It demonstrated that He had made an end of sins, effected reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness (Dan. 9:24). It affords proof of God's approval of the Mediator's work and the acceptance of His sacrifice. It meant that the whole Election of Grace were delivered from death and Hell when their federal Head became “alive for evermore.” The resurrection of Christ is both the pledge and the prototype of the resurrection of His sleeping people. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above” (Col. 3:1). And what are those things which are above? Spiritual rest, spiritual joy—complete deliverance from our warfare with sin, unalloyed rejoicing in the Lord. Then “seek” them: by the actings of faith, by the exercise of hope, by the outgoings of love. We should have a double enjoyment of the things above: by anticipation now, by realization then.

The same keynote is struck in the first stanza of Psalm 92. It is to be noted that the inspired heading to this Psalm is, “A Song for the Sabbath.” And what is its opening theme? This, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the LORD, and to sing praises unto Thy name, O Most High: To show forth Thy lovingkindness in the morning, and Thy faithfulness every night. Upon an instrument of ten strings, and upon the psaltery; upon the harp with a solemn sound. For Thou, LORD, hast made me glad through Thy work: I will triumph in the works of Thy hands. O LORD, how great are Thy works; and Thy thoughts are very deep” (vv. 1-5). Praise is Sabbatical work: the joyfulness of hearts resting in the Lord. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is essential that we be supremely occupied with His perfections on that day.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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January, 1940

### THE RIGHT BEGINNING.

How much depends upon a right beginning. If the foundation be faulty, the superstructure is insecure; if the babe be undernourished the child will be unhealthy; if the child grows up uneducated, the man is handicapped for life. Doubly so does this hold good in spiritual matters. If the preacher ignores the Law and presents only the Gospel, his “converts” will be as worthless as wheat sown upon ground which was neither plowed nor harrowed. If the babe in Christ be erroneously indoctrinated, he is disqualified from fighting the good fight of faith. If the local church fails to maintain a Scriptural discipline, and instead spends its energies in home and foreign “missions,” then disastrous will be the outcome. In like manner, if we enter upon a new year without beginning it properly, then we cannot expect to enjoy spiritual prosperity therein.

“In the beginning GOD” (Gen. 1:1). Thus opens the Sacred Scriptures, and since they are of Divine authorship what other frontispiece could they possibly have! This is the very essence of their inspiration: “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the Scripture is of any private interpretation (human origination), for the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20, 21). Not to human skill nor to human goodness is the Bible to be attributed but rather to the wisdom and superintendence of the Spirit is it to be ascribed. So, too, of the *contents* of the Scriptures: “In the Beginning God”—He is the Alpha as well as the Omega of their subject matter. From Genesis to Revelation *He* has the precedence and the pre-eminence. The precepts, the promises, the predictions of Holy Writ are alike prefaced with a “thus saith the Lord.”

“In the beginning GOD” is *the explanation of salvation*. Alas that this is so faintly recognized and so feebly insisted upon today. True, that in most circles reputed as orthodox it is still allowed that the planning and providing of salvation is of the Lord, but when it comes to the actual reception and enjoyment thereof, proud man determines to place the crown of honour upon his own head, by insisting that that which made him to differ from the unsaved was his willingness to accept Christ. But from whence did such willingness originate? Certainly not from mere nature, for the heart of every unregenerate person is stubbornly steeled against its Maker. God must take away the heart of stone and impart a heart of flesh before there will be any yielding to the gracious influences of His blessed Spirit. The fact is that we love Him because He first loved us. Had He never chosen us to be His sons, we should never have chosen Him to be our God.

“In the beginning GOD” is *the essence of all genuine piety*. The fear of God and the love of God are the springs from which all true yielding of ourselves unto Him proceeds, and where there is not *that*, real spirituality is absent. Hence we read of the Corinthian saints that they “first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2 Cor. 8:5)—for the Lord wants no man's money till He first possesses his heart. Until we have surrendered ourselves to the authority of God our profession is worthless and our religion is vain. Hence it is that the hortatory section of the first Epistle of the New Testament opens with, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom. 12:1). It is here we must begin, and it is to here we must constantly return.

“In the beginning GOD” was *the keynote of the life of Jesus Christ*, and throughout the whole of His course everything was in perfect keeping therewith. He could say, “I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly” (Psa. 22:10). Herein we perceive His uniqueness, for none other could make such a claim. From the very first breath that He drew, His whole being was completely yielded to God. Hence it was that as a Boy of twelve we hear Him exclaiming, “Wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?” (Luke 2:49). “The LORD is the portion of Mine inheritance” (Psa. 16:5), was His unqualified testimony, and therefore could He affirm, “I have set the LORD always before Me” (Psa. 16:8). Even in the midst of His crucifixion agony He cried, “My God, My God,” and into His hands He trustfully committed His spirit, assured that His soul should not be left in Hades nor His body suffered to see corruption.

“In the beginning GOD.” Is not this the word we particularly need to take unto ourselves and lay to heart as we enter upon a new year? Should we not begin by solemnly renewing our covenant with God and consecrate ourselves afresh to Him? His claims upon us are paramount: gratitude for His countless mercies calls for nothing less. Review the past, my reader: can you discover any cause for regret whenever God was given the first place in your life? Ah, is it not because other things were allowed to displace Him from the throne of your heart that you now find most occasion for sorrow and shame? Then should we not seek to profit from these disastrous lapses and prevent their recurrence? And how can we do so but by contritely confessing our sinful failures and by begging Him to come in and sup with us afresh.

“In the beginning GOD.” Is not this our desire and resolve as we enter upon a new cycle of time? Should

not I, and you, my reader, make this our motto for 1940—that we prayerfully determine to acknowledge the Lord in all our ways; to embark upon no undertaking (great or small); to enter into no fresh relationship; to essay no task—without first seeking God's help and blessing? Let, “in the beginning God,” characterize each fresh day by our turning to Him from whom all our help comes. In perplexity, in sickness, in sorrow, let us turn *to God first*, and not to human counselors, doctors, or loved ones. Yes, and when we have sinned, let us promptly and penitently seek the face of Him who delights in mercy. And should this be the year when death sends us a solemn summons to depart hence, let us submissively place ourselves in His hands and then we shall “fear no evil” as we pass through the valley of shadows, and in a far grander sense will it *then* be true, “in the beginning (of our new experience) GOD,” for “absent from the body, present with the Lord.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1940

### THE HOLY SABBATH

#### 8. *Its Observance.*

Last month we pointed out that the essential principles which should regulate us in the keeping of the Sabbath Day holy are a strict compliance with the letter of the Fourth Commandment and the discharge of the same in the spirit of the New Covenant. It seems to us that such a combination will best enable to preserve the balance, delivering us on the one hand from unwarrantable laxity, and on the other from undue rigour and Pharisaic excess. While it is to be emphatically insisted upon that the moral Law is as much binding on us today as ever it was upon the Jews, yet it must also be as unmistakably affirmed that the Christian receives the Law not from Moses but from the hands of Christ. It is not the irksome tasks of slaves, but the ready and joyous service of *sons* and *daughters* which God asks from believers.

It should be the diligent concern of the Christian to observe the Sabbath Day and to perform the duties required therein with a frame of mind becoming God's dear children, and in a spirit answering to the freedom and liberty of the Gospel. We are to serve God in all things “in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter” (Rom. 7:6). That is to say, our obedience and worship is to be rendered unto God with a spirit of grace, joy, liberty, and a sound mind—and not in that darkness, dread, and servility which characterized the old covenant. In contrast from the blessed liberty wherewith Christ makes believers free, that which marked Judaism was a bondage frame of mind, so that their observance of the duties of the Law, and consequently of the Sabbath, were rendered in a servile spirit.

The Puritan John Owen pointed out three things tending thereto. First, the dreadful giving of the Law on Sinai. The fearful phenomena which accompanied the promulgation of the Law at that time was designed to strike terror not only into the generation who immediately witnessed it, but also throughout all generations of the Mosaic economy to awe the hearts of Israel with a dread and terror of it. In proof of this we find the Apostle declaring plainly that Mount Sinai “gendereth to bondage” (Gal. 4:24). It was the very nature of Judaism to bring its subjects into a spiritually servile state, and consequently although secretly on account of the ends of the covenant they were children and heirs, yet “they differed nothing from servants” (Gal. 4:1-3). It is the grand dispensational change brought in by Christ that is treated of in Galatians 4.

Again—the re-enforcement of the Adamic Covenant, with the promise and threat of it, necessarily produced the same effect upon the nation of Israel, for that covenant was binding upon them throughout the whole continuance of Judaism. True, the Moral Law had a new use and end given unto it at Sinai, yet those who received it were so much in the dark and the proposal of that new end and use was attended with so great an obscurity, that they could not look unto the comfort and liberty which was to be the grand outcome. “The Law made nothing perfect,” and what was of grace in the administration of it was so veiled under typical ceremonies and shadows that they could not behold “the end” or design of that which was to be abolished (2 Cor. 3:13)—where the same grand dispensational change is also discussed.

Finally, the affixing of the death penalty to the Law increased this bondage. The grim prospect of death overshadowing disobedience would obviously inspire their service with terror, and this is exactly what it was designed to express and produce, so as to represent the original curse of the whole Law (Gal. 3:13). Thereby the majority of them were greatly awed and terrified, though a few of them, by special grace, were enabled to delight themselves in God and His holy ordinances. By these things, then, was administered a “spirit of bondage to fear,” which by the Apostle is opposed to “the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba Father” (Rom. 8:15). From those things arose the many anxious scruples which were upon them in the observance of the Sabbath. Though they boasted they were the children of Abraham and never in bondage, yet the Saviour insisted that, whatever they pretended, they were not free until the Son should make them free (John 8:36).

If it were needful for the Apostle to remind the believing Hebrews that they did not go to Sinai, but to Mount Sion, to receive the Law, it is requisite that believers be taught the same today. “For *ye are not come* unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the words should not be spoken to them any more: (for they could not endure that which was commanded, and if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: and so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.) But *ye are come* unto Mount Sion and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem . . . and to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better things than that of Abel” (Heb. 12:18-24).

Under the Gospel, Christians are delivered from all the terror-provoking considerations which brought the Jews into such spiritual bondage. They are connected with a radically different order of things, for “Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all” (Gal. 4:26), which is but another way of saying that we receive the Law of our obedience from Jesus Christ, who speaks from Mount Sion, and

who is to be heeded with a filial spirit of liberty (cf. Gal. 5:1). So far as Christians are concerned the Adamic covenant is absolutely abolished, nor is the remembrance of it anyway revived (Heb. 8:13), so that it should have any influence upon their minds. They have been taken into a Covenant full of peace and joy, for “The law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

In the Covenant of Grace we receive the spirit of Christ or adoption to serve God without legal fear (Luke 1:74; Rom. 8:15; Gal. 4:6), and there is not anything more insisted on in the Gospel as the principal privilege thereof. Nor would it be of any account to have liberty in the word and rule, if we had it not in the spirit and principle. It is by this Gospel liberty we are delivered from that anxious solicitude about particular instances in outward duties, which was a great part of the yoke imposed by the system of Judaism. It is most important and needful that this principle of evangelical freedom be insisted upon (for though the Fall has made us prone unto lawlessness, yet by nature we are also essentially legalistic), otherwise one of the most vital and fundamental elements of the Gospel will be submerged.

In all his duties, the Christian should look upon God as his *Father*, for through Christ both believing Jews and believing Gentiles have “access in one spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Our Father is not One who will “always chide,” nor does He “watch our steps” for our hurt. He is not One who binds upon us a grievous burden, but “knoweth our frame and remembereth that we are dust” (Psa. 103:14). He does not tie us down to rigid exactness in outward things, while we act in a holy spirit of filial obedience as His children. There is a vast difference between the duties of servants and sons, as there is between obeying a master and a parent. The consideration and application of this principle if it be regulated by the general rules laid down in the Word will resolve a thousand such scruples as perplexed the Jews of old.

Let it also be observed that our Father requires to be worshipped “in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). He has far more respect to the inward frame of our hearts wherewith we serve Him, than He does to the mere outward performance of duties. The latter can only be accepted by Him as they are the expressions and demonstrations thereof. If, then, in our observance of the Holy Sabbath our hearts are single and sincere in our desires for His glory with delight, it is of more price with Him than the most rigid and punctilious observance of external duties by number and measure. “It hath been no small mistake that men have laboured more to multiply directions about external duties, giving them out as it were by number or tale, than to direct the inward man unto a due performance of the whole duty of the sanctification of the day according to the spirit and genius of Gospel obedience” (John Owen, to whom we are indebted for much of the above).

Here, then, is the essential difference between the Judaical and the Christian Sabbath: the minds of believers are no longer influenced to the duties of its observance by the curse of the Law and the terror thereof as represented in the threatened penalty of death. Instead it is love for the Person of Jesus Christ and respect for His authority which are the springs of their obedience. This cannot be insisted upon too strongly, for it marks the difference between a slavish and filial compliance. Consequently our main duty lies in an endeavour to obtain spiritual joy and delight in the services of this Day, as these are the special effects of spiritual liberty. Nor will this be difficult to attain if we are actively engaged in the privileges and blessings of the Gospel: the actings of faith upon the benefits secured for us by Christ cannot fail to produce deeper devotion, for faith ever works by love.

Those who have read this magazine for any length of time will scarcely need to be told that in what has been pointed out above we are far from joining hands with those who belittle the sanctity of the Lord's Day and who contend that they are so delivered from the Law that they are free to please themselves (within the limitations of decency) as to how they show their respect for this ordinance. There is a world of difference between spiritual liberty and fleshly license. Those whom Christ makes free are freed *Godwards* and not *sinwards*. The Rule of obedience is the same for those who are now under the New Covenant as it was for those under the Old: it is the spring from which obedience proceeds which is altered. Then, it was the obedience of servants in terror of death for disobedience; now, it is the worship of sons out of gratitude to a loving Father.

Our first and chief concern must be to diligently see to it that the Lord is not robbed by us of any part of His due on the Sabbath Day; yet care needs also to be taken that we are not brought under bondage to “the commandments and doctrines of men.” It has to be admitted that some, with a zeal which was not according to knowledge, felt that the sanctification of the Lord's Day could best be secured by multiplying the duties of piety. Accordingly, they drew up excessive directions regarding the same, both proscribing and prescribing that which lacked Scriptural authority for the same under the Gospel. When such a strictness is required that the saints cannot come up to it with a delight therein, then we may rightly suspect that the requirements laid down by God have been exceeded, and the inevitable result will be a swinging to the opposite extreme of laxity.

We cannot improve upon the ways of the Lord, and any attempt to do so must inevitably meet with failure. It is just as foolish to go beyond the Rule which He has given us, as it is wrong for us to come short thereof. Where He has particularized we must not generalize, and where He has only generalized we should not dogmatically particularize. Is it not at this very point that one of the most outstanding differences between the two economies is to be found? Under the Mosaic God furnished detailed laws for the Jews to heed—laws which pertained to every phase of their lives—but under the Christian He has, in many instances, supplied us only with general principles for the regulation of our conduct. Considerable latitude is allowed us in the application of those principles to particular instances—as is clear from such passages as Romans 14:1-9; 1 Corinthians 8:8-9, etc. Those, then, who are not content with urging unto a compliance with such general principles, and instead, draw up a full code of specific regulations are contravening the genius of Christianity and inculcating the spirit of Judaism.

In order to prevent misunderstanding at this point, we call attention to one or two of the general principles enunciated in the Epistles, to which we must ever turn for full-orbed Christianity. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Here is expressed the fundamental principle for the regulating of practical godliness: this is the grand rule which is ever to guide us where express precepts are not supplied—self is to be denied and the eye fixed on God alone, so that we aim at honouring Him in everything. “Let all things be done decently and in order” (1 Cor. 14:40). This is the general rule to regulate us in all the details of public worship as the former concerned more directly our domestic or private lives. It is a simple principle which, if heeded, will furnish guidance on many matters of church life concerning which the New Testament does not specifically legislate.

“Let all your things be done with charity” (1 Cor. 16:14). If this were duly attended to, how many disputes

would be avoided, ill-feelings spared, and difficulties solved? All our affairs, domestically and ecclesiastically, should be regulated by love. Earnestness must not degenerate into bitterness, nor firmness into tyranny. If zeal be governed by love then excesses and cruelty will be obviated. “Whatsoever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men” (Col. 3:23). Here is yet another general principle, which is to govern us in all our undertakings: our service is not to be forced but spontaneous, rendered not grudgingly but gladly. It will be noted that the chief emphasis in these general principles is thrown upon the *inward* springs of action rather than upon the outward performances themselves, and that they afford room for the exercise of sanctified common sense, moral instincts, and Spiritual intuitions.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father” (Isa. 58:13, 14). This is one of the many Old Testament predictions which relates chiefly to Gospel times—the section in which it occurs clearly denoting this, coming as it does after the death of Christ in Chapter 53. In it we may clearly discern the two leading principles which we have contended for throughout this article: the maintenance of the letter of the Fourth Commandment, and a compliance therewith in the spirit of the New Covenant. While there is much greater liberty under the Christian economy than there was under the Mosaic, yet the standard of holiness is not lowered nor are the requirements of God waived.

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath.” This, it seems to us, has a twofold force: a general and a specific—if you refrain from trampling upon it, and if you abstain from journeying and gadding about on that Day. The opening clause is explained by, “from doing thy pleasure on My holy day”: fleshly indulgence is no more permissible now than it was under the old covenant. This prohibition is specified in three details: “not doing thine own ways nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words.” The Lord's Day is not to be spent in seeking our secular interests, nor by engaging in worldly recreations, nor by vain and trifling conversation. Positively, we are to “call the Sabbath *a delight*, the holy of the Lord, honourable,” which agree with Psalm 118:24. The reward for such obedience (v. 14) must be understood of New Testament blessings expressed in Old Testament terminology.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

January, 1940

### THE OPPRESSION OF MAN

“Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:134). In the former verse the man of God had begged grace with respect to internal enemies—to the bosom enemy, the flesh—that no sin might have dominion over him. Now he begs for deliverance from external enemies. The saints are not only exercised with *their* corruptions, but also with the malice of wicked men. We have to do both with sin and sinners—with temptations and persecutions. And therefore he desires first to be kept from sin, and after that from danger and trouble. Both are a trouble to us; they were so to David; and God can and will in time give us deliverance from both.

In the text we have, first, *a prayer for mercy*: “Deliver me from the oppression of man.” In the Hebrew it is “from the oppression of *Adam*,” the name of the first father, *for the posterity*. This term is put either by way of distinction, aggravation, or diminution. 1. Man by way of distinction. There is the oppression and tyranny of Satan and sin—but the Psalmist does not mean that now. 2. Man by way of aggravation. No creatures are so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind, but usually a man's enemies are those of his own household. The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred. We are of the same stock, and reason should tell everyone of us that we should do as we would be done to. Nay, of the same religion. We are cemented together by the blood of Christ, which obliges us to more brotherly kindness; and if we differ in a few things, we have more cause of alliance and relations enough to love one another more than we do. But for all this there is the oppression of man.

3. Man by way of diminution. To lessen the fear of this evil, the term “Adam” is given men, to show their *weakness* in comparison with God. Thou are God, but they that are so ready and forward to oppress and injure us are but men; Thou can easily overrule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chief because of other passages: “Thou wilt judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress” (Psa. 10:18). The oppressors are but men of the earth, a piece of red clay—frail men, that must within a while be laid in the dust. But it is more emphatically expressed: “Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man that shall be made as grass; and forgettest the LORD thy Maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if were ready to destroy? And where is now the rage of the oppressor?” (Isa. 51:12, 13). When you have the immortal and almighty God to be your Protector, should you be afraid of a weak mortal man that is but Adam—a little enlivened dust? Within a little while he and all his fury is over and gone.

In the text we have, second, *a resolution and promise* of duty: “I will keep Thy precepts.” This is a constant observation of all God's commandments. If God would interpose for his rescue. But did David do well to suspend his obedience upon so uncertain a condition? I answer—No. We must not understand it so as if he did bargain with God upon those terms and not otherwise; or as if before he had not kept them, and would now begin to. No, he would keep them; only this would be a new engagement to press him to keep them more constantly and more accurately. Look throughout this Psalm, and you shall find David still at his duty whatever his condition is. “The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from Thy law” (v. 51)—there he is scorned, but not discouraged. “The hands of the wicked have robbed me; yet have I not forgotten Thy law” (v. 61)—there he is plundered, yet not discouraged. “The proud have forged a lie against me but I will keep Thy precepts with my whole heart” (v. 69)—falsely accused but not discouraged. His meaning was not that he would serve God no longer unless He would deliver him, but that he should have a *new obligation*—this should engage us afresh. He does beforehand promise that he would walk with God more closely.

From the text thus opened, we have these points:—First, deliverance from oppression is a blessing to be sought from the hands of God in *prayer*. Second, when God delivers us from the oppression of man, we should be quickened and encouraged in His service. Third, when we are praying for deliverance, we may interpose a promise for obedience. I will develop the first point by answering the question *why*, and then show you *how*. Why? This may be strengthened by these reasons—

First, we have liberty to ask for temporal things. Many think it too carnal to pray for health, food and raiment, long life, temporal deliverance. But what God has promised we may lawfully pray for: a prayer is but a promise sued for. These blessings are adopted into the covenant, as being useful to us in our journey; and therefore we may ask for them. Christ has taught us to pray that we may ask: “Give us this day our daily bread.” Protection and maintenance we ask for, as well as pardon and grace. It conduces to the honour of God that we *should* ask these things of Him, that we may testify our dependence, and acknowledge His inspection and government over all the affairs of the world. “He hath prepared His throne for judgment” (Psa. 9:7). Courts of justice among men are not always open to hear the plaintiff, but the Lord holds court continually: we may come to Him every day. He has prepared His throne to this end: to hear the petitions of His people when they are oppressed.

Second, our spiritual welfare is concerned in such temporal deliverances that we may serve God without impediment or distraction. The oppression of man is an impediment: it takes us away from many opportunities of service and bringing honour to God. “Pray that your flight be not in winter or on the Sabbath Day” (Matt. 24:20). Though it were lawful, it was grievous to the body to have flight in winter; to the soul to have it on the Sabbath. “Oppression will make a wise man mad” (Eccl. 7:7): it will discompose our spirits. Therefore it being so that oppression is ever reckoned among the temptations, we may pray not to enter into it.

Third, the glory of God is concerned. His people will honour Him more if one, especially an eminent one, be delivered from the oppression of men: “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name” (Psa. 142:7). Besides the honour done to God by His people, He will more manifest Himself and His justice to the world. “The LORD is known by the judgments which He executeth” (Psa. 9:16). The world is led by sense: God will not be regarded as a Friend to persecutors. In short, it is not for the honour of God that His people should be left under oppression, as if He sought not after and cared for their welfare. Note how the afflicted condition of the church is called “the reproach of the heathen” (Ezek. 36:30). The heathen would cast this in their teeth, as if their God had no respect for them or were not able to help them.

Fourth, prayer engages us to constancy. God's deliverance will be better for us than our own; that is, than those sinful shifts and ways of escape that we can devise. What we ask of God must be had in God's way. It binds us to seek no other way of escape than we can commend to God's blessing in prayer. It is said of the saints: they “were tortured, not accepting deliverance: that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Heb. 11:35). Would any refuse deliverance when it is tendered to them? Yes, upon such spiteful conditions: they were commanded to do something contrary to the laws of God, and therefore they preferred God's deliverance and not their own.

Fifth, seeking deliverance at the hands of God does ease the heart of a great deal of trouble, and deliver it from those inordinate affections and tormenting passions which otherwise the oppression of man might raise in us—fear, grief, anger, envy, despair, dread to suffer more, sorrow for what we suffer already, anger and envy against those oppressors by whom we suffer, and despair because of the continuance of our molestations. All these are mischiefs to the soul, but can be cured by prayer.

1. *Fear*, because of the mightiness of them that oppress, or threaten to oppress. We are told that “the fear of man bringeth a snare, but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe” (Prov. 29:25). We are full of distracting thoughts, and if we cherish them they will weaken our trust in God and dependence upon His promises. Nay, the mischief will not stop there: they who trust not God, can never be true to Him: we shall run to carnal shifts and fearing men more than God do things displeasing to Him. But how shall we ease our hearts of this burden? By prayer? Partly, because then we use our fear aright when it only drives us to seek God's protection: “Jehoshaphat feared, and set himself to seek the LORD” (2 Chron. 20:3). And partly because prayer discovers a higher object of fear: the fear of God drives out the fear of man. In God's strength we may defy enemies: see Psalm 27:1.

2. *Grief*. It clogs the heart and stays the wheels so that we drive on heavily in the spiritual life. Worldly

sorrow works death (2 Cor. 7:10): it brings on hardness of heart and quenches all our vigour. “By sorrow of heart the spirit is broken” (Prov. 15:13). A heavy heart does little to the purpose for God. Now how shall we get rid of this? The cure is by prayer. For vent gives ease to all our passions. “Be anxious for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known unto God” (Phil. 4:6). As when wind gets into the caverns of the earth, it causes terrible convulsions and earthquakes till it get a vent: so the mind is eased when we can pour out our care into the bosom of God, and wait till deliverance comes from above.

3. *The violent passions* of anger, envy, and revenge against oppressors: these are all for naught and do a world of mischief. Anger discomposes us, and transports the soul into uncomely motions against God and men, making us fret, and tempting us to atheism (Psa. 73); making us weary in well doing (Psa. 37). The Devil works upon such discontent, and we are apt to run into these disorders. How shall we get rid of these distempers? By *prayer*, in which we get a sight of the other World, and then these things will seem nothing to us. Prayer acquaints ourselves with God and the process of His providence, and so we shall see an end of things (Psa. 73:17); then all is quiet. And so for revenge, that, too, is an effect of the former. When we plead before God we see the justice of what is unjust, and hard dealings from men to be justly inflicted by God; and so the heart is calmed—“*the Lord* bid him curse” (2 Sam. 16:11). Our very praying is a committing ourselves to Him that judges righteously, and therefore we ought not, we *need* not, avenge ourselves.

4. *Impatience and despair*. This is a very great evil, contrary to faith and hope and dependence, which the Christian religion does mainly establish; and makes way for the worst ends—either total apostasy from God, or atheism, or self-destruction. Now this is very detrimental to us when oppressions lie long upon us: “this evil is from the LORD; why should I wait on the LORD any longer?” (2 Kings 6:33). “But thou saidest, There is no hope” (Jer. 2:25). Desperate! “No, for I have loved strangers, and after them will I go”: I will take my own course: there is no hope—it is vain to wait upon the Lord any longer. And even if things do not grow to that height, yet the children of God become wary and faint in their minds (Heb. 12:3). Now we must keep afoot some hope while we have a heart to call upon God. The suit is still pending in the court of Heaven when it seems to be over on earth: and we see there is cause to wait for God's answer. “He that shall come, will come” (Heb. 10:37). God may tarry long, but will never come too late.

N.B. The above, slightly condensed, is part of a sermon by the Puritan Thomas Manton. The remainder of the sermon will appear in the February issue (D.V.).

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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February, 1940

### UNWORTHINESS

It is impossible for the creature to do anything which merits anything at the hands of God, for even if he should fully perform his duty he is still an “unprofitable servant” (Luke 17:10). Doubly so is this the case with a fallen creature, for his entire record is one of demerit. He is an undischarged bankrupt, and has nothing with which to pay his just debts. Clemency from his Creditor is his only hope. It is at this very point that Divine grace meets his deep need, for grace is favour shown to the undeserving and ill-deserving. The grace of God abounds even unto the holy angels, but it superabounds toward the depraved descendants of Adam. It lay not within the power of the original denizens of Heaven to do anything which entitled them to such high honours: it was grace pure and simple that made them the attendants of the King of kings. But to take on High those who have groveled in the miry clay of earth is favour shown to those who have earned the wages of eternal death.

Now when Divine grace bestows salvation upon the ill-deserving, it makes them conscious of the infinite favour that has been shown them. Fallen man is naturally proud, complacent, and self-righteous. He credits to himself good marks to which he is not entitled, and those against him he denies or seeks to explain away. He prates of his religious performances (Luke 18), and considers himself entitled to even more than that which he receives from God (Matt. 20:10, 11). But wherever the miracle of regenerating grace is wrought, all this is reversed. Its subject is stripped of his peacock feathers, made poor in spirit, and humbled into the dust before God. He is made painfully aware of the loathsome plague of his heart, given a sight of his vileness in the light of God's holiness, and brought to realize that he is a spiritual pauper,

dependent upon Divine charity. He now readily acknowledges that he is a Hell-deserving sinner.

“I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which Thou hast showed unto Thy servant” (Gen. 32:10). This is something more than the language of a particular individual who lived in the remote past: it is the confession made by all who are the recipients of the saving grace of God. Jacob was, in the leading features of his history, a representative character. Before he had done any good or evil, while yet in his mother's womb, it was revealed that he was the elect and beloved of God (Rom. 9:10-13). Yet the course followed by him in early life made it apparent that he was, “by nature a child of wrath even as others.” The distinguishing favour of God was shown to him at Bethel, where a fugitive from justice, alone, asleep on the bare ground, the Lord appeared to him. Severe trials then followed, but it was not until he was “greatly afraid and distressed” (Gen. 32:7) that he took his proper place before the Lord. How blessed it is to be assured that “the God of Jacob is our refuge” (Psa. 46:7). The “God of Jacob” is the God of all who feel and acknowledge their utter unworthiness and their complete dependency on sovereign grace.

“I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance; but He that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am *not worthy* to bear” (Matt. 3:11). If Jacob is to be regarded as a representative believer (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob portraying the three sides of his character), then John the Baptist is surely to be looked upon as the prototype of the officers in Christ's kingdom. One of the outstanding and identifying marks which distinguish His true under-shepherds from the false is their deep and genuine humility. The public representatives of Him who is “meek and lowly in heart” are themselves characterized by diffidence and modesty. They marvel at the honour bestowed upon them and own their utter undeservedness and unfitness for such a high calling. Thus it was with the man whom Divine grace called to be our Lord's forerunner. So far from being puffed up by the dignified position he held, he did not feel meet to unloose his Master's shoes. Though the greatest of them born of women (Matt. 11:11), his motto was, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30).

“The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am *not worthy* that Thou shouldest come under my roof” (Matt. 8:8). Here again we perceive the same leading effect which is produced in all of its subjects by the miracle of saving grace: pride is subdued, self is effaced, a sense of ill-desert takes possession of the heart. In this instance we behold one who belonged to that hard and haughty race, the Romans. He was a man of rank, an officer in Caesar's army, accustomed to issuing orders to those under his authority. Beautiful is it to see the lion transformed into a lamb. He had appealed to the great Physician on behalf of a servant lying sick of the palsy. The blessed Saviour at once declared, “I will come and heal him; whereupon he replied, I am not worthy that Thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed” (v. 8). The sequel is instructive, “When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel” (v. 10): one of the elements of great faith is deep humility.

“For I am the least of the Apostles, *that am not worthy* (Greek) to be called an Apostle” (1 Cor. 15:9). “Least” not in the sight of God nor as venerated by the Church, but “least” in his own estimation; as he wrote in another place, “less than the least of all saints” (Eph. 3:8). It was not that he was lacking in qualifications or gifts, but that he had such a sense of his pre-conversion sins. How meanly he thought of

himself! He felt that he was unfit to fight under the banner of Christ, still less to be His chief lieutenant. What complete self-abasement! “But by the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor. 15:10): the position he held, the authority he possessed, the success which attended his labours, were all freely ascribed to Divine favour. Here is proof of what we said in our opening paragraph: where the saving grace of God operates, it produces a sense of ill-desert. The most eminent Christians are always the most lowly ones; those honoured in Christ's service are deeply conscious of their unprofitableness.

“*Worthy is the LAMB*” (Rev. 5:12). This brief article would be incomplete did we fail to bring out the grand design of the Divine favour. The operations of God's grace are intended not only to abase its subjects but to exalt the Saviour. If those blessed workings produce in us a deep sense of our utter unworthiness, they also result in a profound conviction of the immeasurable worthiness of Christ. Beautifully is this portrayed in Revelation 5. Waiving the question as to exactly what is signified by the sealed book in the right hand of the Throne-Sitter, attention is focussed upon the fact that none in Heaven or earth was worthy to open the same. This provides the background for the central figure: “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book” (v. 5). Infinite merits are possessed by Him, and all the inhabitants of Heaven, angelic and human, unite in ascribing worthiness to the Lamb. “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto Thy name give glory, for Thy mercy and for Thy truth's sake” (Psa. 115:1).—A.W.P.

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### THE HOLY SABBATH

#### 8. *Its Observance.*

“If thou turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words” (Isa. 58:13). We quote this passage again because it sums up what we have sought to bring before the reader in our last two articles. First, it expresses the grand truth that the Sabbath is not to be looked upon as an irksome duty, but as a sacred privilege. Instead of being a burden grievous to be borne, it affords us a special opportunity for profitable and joyous exercises. The spirit in which we are to enter upon its hallowed employments is neither one of bondage nor dread, but of freedom and gladness. We are to find in it our greatest Joy of the week, delighting ourselves in the Lord, all that is within us praising His holy name.

The accompanying promises afford great encouragement for those whose sincere desire it is to honour the Lord in this ordinance: “Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the *high places* of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it” (v. 14). Expressed in New Covenant terms, that means, first, such an observance of the Sabbath will afford us much more comfort in the Lord. “The more pleasure we take in serving God, the more pleasure we shall find in it. If we go about duty cheerfully, we shall go from it with satisfaction” (Matthew Henry). Second, we shall be given victory over our spiritual enemies: observe how the Lord's causing Israel to triumph over the Egyptians is spoken of as, “He made him ride on the *high places* of the

earth” (Deut. 32:13). Third, our souls shall be richly fed with the blessings of the covenant. The precious products of the antitypical Canaan—fed with foretastes of it now.

Having fully established the two basic principles which are to regulate us in Sabbath observance, we must now point out something of the practical application of the same to the details of this duty. First, we will consider *the preparation* which should be made, for we cannot enter properly or profitably into the keeping of this holy rest without a fit approach thereto. It is noteworthy that this expression, “the preparation, that is, the day before the Sabbath” (Mark 15:42) occurs not in the Old Testament but in the New, being found in substance in each of the four Gospels. This sacred institution is not to be approached lightly and carelessly, but with definite forethought and conscientious preparation of our secular affairs, our domestic arrangements, and especially of our hearts. We greatly fear that it is failure at this very point which is the reason why so many miss the richest benefits of this ordinance.

Before proceeding further we must carefully consider the question as to *when* this “preparation” is to begin, and this requires us to fix the time at which the Sabbath itself commences. In certain quarters this has been made a point of controversy, some contending that it begins at sunset of the preceding day and ends with sunset of its own, appealing to, “from even unto even shall ye celebrate your Sabbath” (Lev. 23:32). That this was one noteworthy feature of and obtained throughout the Mosaic economy is readily granted, but that the same is binding on us today we emphatically deny. In the first place, a day of rest, according to the rules of natural equity, ought to be proportioned unto a day of work, and that is reckoned both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament as from morning to evening: Psalm 104:20-23; Matthew 20:1-8.

In the second place, our Lord Jesus Christ, who in His resurrection gave beginning and being to the special Day of holy rest under the Gospel, came forth from the grave not until the morning of the first day of the week, when the light of the sun began to dispel the darkness of the night, or when it dawned towards the day, as it is variously expressed by the Evangelists. This should settle the matter for His people. Thus, the Christian Sabbath is again sharply distinguished from the Judaical Sabbath. Finally, it should be pointed out that in the description furnished of the first seven days of Genesis 1, that while it is said of each of the first six that it was constituted of an evening and a morning, yet of the seventh this is significantly omitted: it is simply called “the seventh day,” without any mention of the preceding evening. Thus the Mosaic was distinguished from the primitive Sabbath as well as from the Christian.

Our Sabbath, then, is to be regarded as extending from midnight of the seventh day (Saturday) till midnight of the first day. Thus the “preparation” for it would fall upon the Saturday, particularly the evening of that day. “Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy,” includes the taking of all necessary forethought which is required for the sanctifying thereof. It is a profanation of the Lord's Day to make it one of feasting, and therefore its meals should be as plain and simple as possible, and all cooking done on Saturday (Exo. 16:23). The women who cared for our Lord's body mixed the spices and ointments on the day preceding, considering it a servile work not suitable for the Sabbath (Luke 23:54, 56). Has not this been recorded for our learning?

The due preparation of our hearts and minds is especially needful. As we are to keep our foot when going

to the house of God (Eccl. 5:1), that is, consider what we are about to do, to where we are going, and that which is due God in our solemn approaches unto Him; so we must not enter into the sacred exercises of His holy day without thought and prayer. "I will be sanctified in them that draw nigh Me" (Lev. 10:3) is the Lord's unwavering requirement. He is greatly dishonoured when we carelessly rush into any of the appointed means of grace, and therefore does the Apostle exhort us, "Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably, with reverence and godly fear" (Heb. 12:28). This means far more than grave countenances and bodily postures of veneration: let us have hearts and minds that are spiritualized.

Our first concern should be to see to it that our minds are freed from the worries of business and the cares of this life, so that they may without distraction be staved upon the Lord. Much converse with the world is very apt to beget a worldly frame of mind in us, and being so much absorbed with earthly things during the six working days taints the heart with worldliness. Though it be our duty in all our secular concerns to live unto God therein and do everything unto His glory, yet they exert such an influence upon us as to unfit us for spiritual exercises and heavenly contemplation. And therefore it devolves upon us to purge our minds of secular affairs, business concerns, and worldly cares, as far as in us lies, so that we may the better and more wholly rest in and delight ourselves with the Lord.

In endeavouring to bring our souls into a fit frame for the duties of the Lord's Day, the evening before we should engage our thoughts with meditations suitable thereto. This is a fitting time to consider the lost Sabbaths of our unregenerate days, and which we have to account for or repent of. This is the time to review the week now nearly ended, and put right with God our sad failures therein. Then is the time to meditate upon the wondrous patience of God, which has so long borne with our waywardness and slackness, and who notwithstanding has spared us to approach another Sabbath. This is the time to ponder the vanity of worldly things and how utterly contemptible they are when compared with communion with God. This is the time to give ourselves up to confession, to prayer, to praise.

As our eyes open upon the light of the Sabbath we should most earnestly pray that we may be preserved from trifling away its holy hours, and seriously should we ask ourselves how we may most profitably improve them. We ought to be very importunate with God that He will graciously banish from our minds everything which would distract and turn us away from Him, that He would so sanctify our hearts that from the beginning to the end of His day we may be entirely given up to those ends and exercises for which He has consecrated the Sabbath. We ought also to be equally importunate in praying that He will grant His ministers the assistance of the Holy Spirit in preparing a message which will glorify Him and edify His people. So, too, we should ask the Lord for the same spiritual mercies to be bestowed upon our fellow-saints as we have craved for ourselves. This will serve to prepare us to engage in family devotions, before we wait upon the public worship of the day.

Throughout the Sabbath we are to abstain from everything that would impede its spiritual observance. Under no circumstances must there be any buying or selling on that Day, or the encouraging of those who do so. Sunday newspapers and all secular literature is to be then strictly banned by us. The paying of social calls and the making of unnecessary visits whereby the worship of God in families is interrupted and worldly conversation is introduced are desecrations of the Sabbath. All unnecessary work in providing for our dining tables on that day is to be avoided: a cold meal with God's blessing is infinitely better than a hot

one with His frown. Great watchfulness must be exercised against idle conversation. “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers” (Eph. 4:29)—that holds good at all times, but doubly so on the Sabbath.

All needless taking of journeys on the Lord's Day are sinful. In this connection we would earnestly remind the reader of that exhortation of Christ's, “But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath Day” (Matt. 24:20). This was plainly a prophetic warning against that species of Sabbath desecration which has, alas, become so rife. It is rendered the more striking inasmuch as it is the only warning He gave to His disciples against any particular kind of encroachment on the Day of Rest. And for what does He here teach them to pray? Not that they may be kept from travelling for pleasure or for purposes of commerce, but that in a time of calamity and danger events might be so ordered by God that they should not be obliged to preserve their lives and flee for safety by travelling on *that* day. How He wished to impress upon us the unique sanctity of the Sabbath!

Turning now to the positive side: the reading and pondering of the Scripture should have a prominent place in the occupations of this Day. In our strenuous age there are comparatively few who have many leisure hours through the week, and often they are too weary to use those they do have for serious study. But it is far otherwise on the Day of Rest: special opportunity is then afforded for seeking *spiritual* nourishment. At least one hour in the early morning, another in the afternoon, and one more before retiring, ought to be spent in the Word of God and devotional literature. As six days have been directed mainly to providing for the needs of the body, the seventh is to be improved by seeking food for the soul: thereby is our strength renewed and we are fitted for the duties of the ensuing week.

In addition to seasons of private prayer and feeding on the Word, all our spare moments on the Lord's Day should be employed in spiritual meditations. Then is our golden opportunity for serious reflections and delightful contemplation: to turn our thoughts from things temporal to things spiritual, and to project our minds into that eternal state to which we are constantly approaching. We should meditate on God as Creator and delight ourselves afresh in all His wondrous works. We should consider how we lost our original rest in God by sin, and how He might justly have abandoned us to eternal restlessness. We should meditate upon the *recovery* of our rest in God by the great atonement of Christ and His triumphant emerging from the grave. This is indeed the principal duty of this day: to dwell upon and rejoice in this recovery of a rest in God and of a rest for God in us. This is the fruit of infinite wisdom, amazing grace, and incomprehensible love: then let us give glory to God and His Christ for the same. We are also to remember that the Sabbath is a pledge of our everlasting rest with God.

Let it also be observed that this Day affords the most favourable opportunity for *training children* in the fear and nurture of the Lord. Family instruction is one of the most important duties thereof. How many thousands owe their conversion, under God, to Sabbath catechising, Scripture reading, and religious instruction, and the simple but fervent prayers of a pious parent or relative! The heads of families should do all they can to promote the spiritual and eternal good of those under their care. No Christian parent should entrust the instructing of his children in the things of God to only Sunday School teachers, but ought to *personally* discharge much of this responsibility. Let portions of the Word be read together, simple explanations and practical applications be made: verses should be allotted for memorizing during

the week, with a hearing of the same on the Sabbath. Such books as Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the life of some Missionary, etc., may also be profitably read to the children.

This is also a season eminently suitable for works of *charity*. All possible doubt on this score has been removed by the specific teaching and personal example of Christ. He affirmed that it is lawful to do well on the Sabbath Day. It is both our privilege and duty, especially of those without family responsibilities, to seek after and minister unto those who are cut off from the public means of grace: to visit the sick and the aged, to read the Word to those who cannot read it for themselves, to engage in acts of mercy and compassion unto those needing our help. The more we endeavour to brighten the lot of others, the more will we enter into the joy of Him who ever went about doing good. It is always the self-centered who are the most discontented and miserable.

We heartily endorse the following observations from the Puritan, Owen. “There is no such certain standard or measure for the observance of the duties of this day, as that every one who exceeds it should by it be cut short, or that those who on important reasons come short of it should be stretched out thereunto. As God provided in His services of old that he who was not able to offer a bullock might offer a dove, with respect unto their outward condition in the world, so here there is an allowance also for the natural temperaments and abilities of men. Only whereas if persons of old had *pretended* poverty to save their charge in the procuring of an offering, it would not have been acceptable, yea, they would themselves have fallen under the curse of the deceiver; so no more now will a pretense of weakness or natural inability be an excuse for any neglect or profaneness. Otherwise, God requires of us and accepts from us according to what we have, and not according to what we have not.

“We see it by experience that some men's natural spirits will carry them to a continuance in the outward observance of duties much beyond, nay, doubly perhaps to what others are able, who yet may observe the holy Sabbath to the Lord with acceptance. And herein lies the spring of the accommodation of these duties to the sick, the aged, the young, the weak, or persons any way distempered. God 'knoweth our frame and remembereth we are dust,' so also that the dust is more discomposed and weakly compacted in some than others. As thus the people gathered manna of old, some more, some less, 'every man according to his appetite,' yet he that gathered much had nothing over, and he that gathered little had no lack' (Exo. 16:17-18). So is everyone in sincerity, according to his own ability, to endeavour the sanctifying of the name of God in the duties of this day, not being obliged by the examples or prescriptions of others, according to their own measures.”

Commenting on the cautions of Isaiah 58:13 Owen said, “I no way think that here is a restraint laid on us from such words, ways and works, as neither hinder the performance of any religious duties belonging to the due celebration of the worship of God on His day, nor are apt in themselves to unframe our spirits or divert our affections from them. And those whose minds are fixed in a *spirit of liberty* to glorify God in and by this day of rest, seeking after communion with Him in the ways of His worship, will be to themselves a better rule for their words and actions, than those who may aim to reckon over all they do or say, which may be done in such a manner as to become the Judaical Sabbath much more than the Lord's Day.

“Although the day be wholly to be dedicated to the ends of a sacred rest before insisted on, yet duties in their performance *drawn out* to such a length as to beget wearisomeness tend not to edification, nor promote the sanctification of the name of God in the worship itself. Regard therefore in all such performances is to be had unto *the weakness* of the natural constitution of some, the infirmities and indisposition of others who are not able to abide in the outward part of duties as others can. And there is no wise shepherd who will rather suffer the stronger sheep of his flock to lose somewhat of what they might reach to in his guidance of them, than to compel the weaker to keep pace with them to their hurt, and it may be to their ruin. Better a great number should complain of the shortness of some duties, who have strength and desires for a longer continuance in them, than that a few who are sincere should be really discouraged by being overburdened, and have the service thereby made useless to them.”

We cannot do better to close this article than by giving the prayer of the godly Baxter:—“O most glorious and gracious Creator and Redeemer, I humbly return my unfeigned thanks for the unspeakable mercies which I have received on Thy Day; and much more, for so great a mercy to all Thy churches and the world: and craving the pardon of the sins which I have committed on Thy Day, I beseech Thee to continue this exceeding mercy to Thy churches and to me, that its blessed privileges and comforts may not be forfeited and lost; and let me serve Thee in the life and light and love of Thy Spirit in these Thy holy days on earth, till I be prepared for and received into the everlasting rest in heavenly glory. Amen.”—A.W.P.

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### THE OPPRESSION OF MAN.

“Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:134). But *how* is this to be asked? First, this is not to be asked as our main blessing: “seek ye *first* the kingdom of God” (Matt. 6:33). If we seek our ease and temporal felicity only, *that* prayer is like a brutish cry: “And they have not cried unto Me with their heart, when they howled upon their beds” (Hosea 7:14). A dog will howl when he feels anything inconvenient. You will never be freed from murmuring and quarrelling at God’s dispensations and questioning His love, if this be the first thing that you seek; and so your prayers will become your snare. Besides the great dishonour to God, it argues the great disorder of your affections that you can be content to have anything apart from God: “Seek ye the LORD and His strength; seek His face evermore” (Psa. 105:4). In all conditions *that* must be our great request, that we may have the favour of God.

Second, it must be asked with submission. It is not absolutely promised, nor intrinsically and indispensably necessary to our happiness, but if the Lord sees fit for His own glory and our good. We cannot take it ill if a friend refuses to lend us a sum of money which he knows will be to our loss and detriment. God sees fit, sometimes, for His own glory and our good, to continue us under oppression, rather than take us out of it. There are two acts of Providence: relieving and comforting the oppressed, and punishing the oppressors. Sometimes God does the one without the other, sometimes both together. Sometimes God will only comfort the oppressed; we cry to Him in our afflictions, and God will not break the yoke but give us strength to bear it: “in the day when I cried Thou answeredst me, and hast strengthened me with strength in my soul” (Psa. 138:3). He gives you strength to bear the burden, if you

continue in your integrity. Sometimes God does punish the oppressor, yet that is no relief to you. You must bear it, for you are to stand to God's will and to wait His leisure to free you from it.

Third, your end must be that God may be glorified, and that you may serve Him more cheerfully. So it is in the text. And again, “Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death; that I may show forth all Thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion; and I will rejoice in Thy salvation” (Psa. 9:13, 14). David begs salvation in order to praise. Temporal mercy should not be loved for itself, nor sought for itself; but as we may glorify God by it: that is to be our end. Lord, I seek not my own interest, but Thine. If you have a carnal end, you miss: “Ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts” (James 4:3)—that ye may please the flesh.

Fourth, we must pray in faith, that God can deliver from the oppression of man, and will do so in due time, when it is good for us. Though our oppressors be ever so mighty, God can break their power, or change their heart. It is a great relief to the soul to consider the several ways that God has to right us. “Then had the churches rest . . . and were multiplied” etc., (Act. 9:31). When was that? When Paul was converted. He was an active instrument against the Church, and God turned his heart; then had the churches rest. Or the Lord may do it by determining their interests that they shall show favour to His people though their hearts be not changed: “when a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him” (Prov. 16:7). Please men, and you cannot say God is your Friend; but please God, and He makes your enemies at peace with you. There is much in the secret chain of Providence: see Daniel 1:9. God can break the yoke by raining judgments on them: see Isaiah 49:24, 25. Therefore we should not be discouraged with unlikelihood when we go to God, who has many ways which poor shortsighted creatures cannot foresee.

God is ready to deliver us. The love which the Lord has for His afflicted people will not suffer His justice to be quiet very long. That God is ready to help and deliver will appear from these things. 1. It is His nature to pity and show mercy to the oppressed and to revenge the oppressor. He pities the afflictions of them that suffer justly, and far beneath their desert, from His own hand: “they put away the strange gods from among them, and served the LORD, and His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel” (Judg. 10:16 and cf. 2 Kings 14:26)—how much more will He pity them that are unworthily oppressed! And the Lord's pitiful nature does incline Him to deliver His people: and when the oppressed cry, “I will hear them; for I am gracious” (Exo. 22:21-27).

2. It is His usual practice and custom: “the LORD executeth judgment and righteousness for all that are oppressed” (Psa. 103:6). If for all; surely for His people. He sits in Heaven to rectify the disorders of men: see Psalm 34:19. 3. It is His office as Judge of the world: “Lift up Thyself, Thou judge of the earth; render a reward to the proud” (Psa. 94:2). Look upon Him only in that notion, according to our natural conceptions, as the supreme cause and Judge of all things. Again, His office as Protector of His people: He is in covenant with them, He is their Sun and Shield, His people's Refuge in time of trouble (Psa. 9:9), when they have none else to flee to.

Now for instruction to teach us what to do when we are oppressed. First, patience. It is the lot of God's children to be often troubled with the world: and badly used. Satan is the ruler of the darkness of this

world, and his subjects cannot endure those who would overturn his kingdom. The good are few, and therefore must look to be oppressed. If there be any breathing room it is God's mercy. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Tim. 3:12 and cf. Gal. 4:29).

Second, let us be prepared to commend our cause to God: "LORD, Thou hast heard the desire of the humble; Thou wilt prepare their hearts, Thou wilt cause Thine ear to hear: to judge the fatherless and the oppressor that the man of the earth may no more oppress" (Psa. 10-17, 18). God prepares the hearts of the humble, How so? By continuing the trouble till they are sensible of the misery of the sin—of the cause. "I will go and return to My place, till they acknowledge their offenses and seek My face" (Hosea 5:15).

Third, when you have prayed, then wait. It is a good sign when we are engaged in prayer, and encouraged to wait. When God has a mind to work, He sets the spirit of prayer at work. How can our prayers be heard when we regard them not ourselves and expect no issue? How should God hear when we pray out of course and do not think our prayers worth the regarding? "I waited patiently for the LORD, He inclined unto me and heard my cry" (Psa. 40:1). "I will watch to see what He will say" (Hab. 2:1). Look for an answer: God does not usually disappoint a waiting people.

When God delivers us from the oppression of man we should be quickened and encouraged in His service. First, because every mercy infers an answerable duty: "But Hezekiah rendered not according to the benefit done unto him" (2 Chron. 32:25). There must be rendering according to the receiving. Second, this is the fittest return, partly because it is real, not verbal. The Lord cares not for words—He knows the secret springs of the heart: see Psalm 50:23. It is good to be speaking good of God's name. This is one way of glorifying, but ordering the conversation aright is that which is most pleasing to Him. And partly, too, because our fear and sorrow are taken away: "I will run the way of Thy commandments when Thou shalt enlarge my heart" (Psa. 119:32 and see Luke 1:74, 75).

We are now under the sad effects of our former unthankfulness, and by remembering our duty we may see our sin. Ingratitude and walking unanswerably to received mercy is the great and crying sin of God's people; therefore we should humble ourselves that we did so little good and that God had so little glory and service from us in former times of liberty. Now God by His present providence shows us the difference: "Because thou servedst not the LORD thy God with joyfulness and with gladness of heart for the abundance of all things, therefore thou shalt serve thine enemies" etc., (Deut. 28:47, 48 and see 2 Chron. 12:8). We must be humbled for the abuse of former mercies before we seek new.

Thus we may know (from the second part of our text) what to have in our eye when we are asking for mercies. The end is first in intention, though last in execution. Do not pray to serve thy lusts more freely, nor think how to execute revenge, nor how we should be provided for—but what glory and service we may bring to God: see Psalm 75:2. It also teaches us how to make our promises to God. When you promise duty and obedience to Him, be sure to be sincere and holy; make due provision that it may be so by mortifying the roots of such distempers as will betray us. When a people in a low condition have a real inclination to praise and glorify God by their mercies as soon as they shall receive them, it is an argument that He will hear.—Thomas Manton.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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March, 1940

### PEACE.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). Nowhere do the moral perfections of Christ appear more blessedly than in the peace which ever possessed His soul! There was nothing in His outward lot calculated to produce composure of mind and satisfaction of heart, but rather everything to the contrary. What did the world give to the Lord Jesus that would produce contentment? A manger for His cradle, the mountain side for His sleeping-chamber, a Cross on which to die. What was there in His circumstances or earthly portion which made for serenity of spirit?—what of external comforts, material riches, social prestige, human fame? Not only was there the absence of those things which are mostly prized by men, but there was the presence of their opposites—that which usually occasion repinings. Yet we never see Him ruffled or hear Him complaining: perfect peace ever possessed His heart.

Never was the peace of anyone so severely tested and tried as was that of Christ's, yet nothing ever disturbed it to the slightest degree. No matter what the provocation, He ever remained calm and unperturbed. “When He was reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not” (1 Peter 2:23). When His enemies spat in His face and plucked out His hair, there was no angry retort. Lack of appreciation from those whom He befriended embittered not His spirit. The vilest of charges were hurled against Him, the foulest indignities were heaped upon Him, yet they only served to demonstrate the unadulterated mildness of His temper. When affronted and ridiculed, He calmly bore their insults. When contradicted by presumptuous sinners He endured, with the utmost tranquility, their unreasonable cavils.

Most gloriously did He make it manifest that He was “the Prince of Peace.”

As courage can only be displayed in the midst of danger, as perseverance requires prolonged difficulty and trial for its exemplification, so the virtue of peace needs provocation and opposition if its blessedness is to be made fully evident. And therefore did Divine providence so order the path of our Redeemer that it might the more conspicuously appear that there was no conceivable experience which could disturb His equanimity. In public and in private, from foe and friend, in life and in death, He was antagonized and assaulted, but His perfect placidity remained unruffled. When enduring the inconceivable agonies of Gethsemane, with strong crying and tears, and bloody sweat, His disciples slumbered and slept. Did their slighted Master express hot resentment at such unkind treatment? No, far from it, He threw the mantle of charity over their failure to watch with Him for one hour, saying, “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

Let us now endeavour to examine more closely this lovely grace so eminently displayed by the Lord Jesus. What was the nature of His peace? What were the essential elements which comprised it? First, an *unshakable confidence in the Divine providence*. Nothing is more effectual in stabilizing the mind and tranquilizing the heart as a firm and steadfast assurance that God controls and directs all the affairs of time. The Gospels record many examples of Christ's confidence therein. Take what is mentioned in Matthew 17:27: there were thousands of fish in that sea—why should this particular one, at this particular moment, be found with the necessary coin when Peter caught and opened its mouth? Take again the incident described in Matthew 21:2, 3: a dozen things might have caused the owner of that ass to change his mind and go elsewhere—Christ's knowledge it *would* be there at that time was not only proof of His omniscience, but also of a particular Providence that orders every detail. Once more, consider Mark 4:35-41: why did Christ sleep so peacefully during the storm? Because He knew they were certain to reach “the other side” (v. 35)—the government of God so ordered it.

Second, His *unchanging trust in God*: that constituted a marked feature of Christ's serenity. This is clear from, “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee: because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa. 26:3). Christ was the only one who ever enjoyed that perfect peace in its undisturbed fullness, because He was the only one whose mind was perpetually stayed on Jehovah. “I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly” (Psa. 22:10). The Lord Jesus lived in complete dependence upon God throughout the whole of His earthly sojourn. He lived by faith on the precious promises of His heavenly Father. In Hebrews 2:11 the Apostle Paul declares, “For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren,” and in proof thereof (v. 13) he quotes Psalm 18:2 where the Messiah affirmed, “I will put My trust in Him.” Christ's trust in God evidenced Him to be one with His brethren, for in becoming the Son of man He was brought into a condition of trouble and distress wherein it was both His duty and privilege to count upon God for deliverance.

As this human perfection of the Saviour' is so feebly apprehended today, we will dwell upon it a little further. So far from belittling the character of our Lord, the fact that He lived in complete dependence upon God makes manifest His moral perfections. “I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not My face from shame and spitting. For the LORD God will help Me;

therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint” (Isa. 50:6, 7). If those words do not set forth the life of faith, what language could do so? “Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth?” (Rom. 8:33, 34). How many of our readers are aware that that triumphant challenge of faith originally issued from the lips of the Man Christ Jesus? Such indeed was the case, as a reference to Isaiah 50:8, 9 clearly shows: at the very moment Pilate was condemning Him, Christ comforted Himself with the assurance that God would vindicate and declare Him righteous. Compare, too, His language in Psalm 16:8-10! That Christ made an open profession of His confidence in the Father is seen in the fact that His enemies reproached Him for “trusting in God” (Matt. 27:43).

Third, His *unparalleled meekness*. “The meek shall inherit the earth, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psa. 37:11). Pride and self-will lie at the root of all unrest and discontent, as they are responsible for our quarrelling with the dispensations of God. Dictators and disturbers of public peace are ever men of arrogance and self-assertiveness. But the Prince of Peace could say, “Learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls” (Matt. 11:29). Meekness is the only virtue which will keep the affections and passions in their proper place and poise. Meekness is the only grace which makes one submissive to God and pleased with all that pleases Him. “Behold Thy King cometh unto Thee, *meek*, and sitting upon an ass” (Matt. 21:5).

Many are the contrasts between the world's peace and Christ's. The world wishes for peace, Christ alone can bestow it. The world's peace is carnal, shallow, and disappointing—but Christ's is spiritual, deep, and satisfying. The world's peace is a dearly-bought one, but Christ's is free. The world's peace is generally an unrighteous one, but Christ's is holy. The world can only give peace after trouble, but Christ can impart peace in the midst of trouble, lifting the heart above it. The world's peace is evanescent, Christ's is lasting, for His gifts are without repentance: He is in one mind in continuing as well as bestowing—His motives are in and of Himself, and therefore always the same. He secures by His power what He gives by His love. His peace cannot be taken away from us. A tyrant once threatened a saint, “I will destroy your home”—you cannot destroy my peace. “I will confiscate your goods”—you cannot rob me of my peace. “I will banish you from your country”—I will take my peace with me. This peace is the legacy of the Prince of Peace to His subjects, but the measure in which they enjoy it is determined by their obedience to God, their surrender to His sovereignty, and their fellowship with Him, and their heart's occupation with their future bliss.—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### *9. Its Opposition.*

We now turn to the least pleasant part of our subject and contemplate the attacks which have been made upon this Divine ordinance. It has been fiercely assailed both in doctrine and in practice, and this by the professed friends of the Lord as well as by His open enemies. Yet this should not surprise us, for since the carnal mind is enmity against God, that enmity ever manifests itself against whatever is of His special ordering—and the more so in proportion as His honour and glory are bound up with any particular appointment. It is at just such a point that the hostility of Satan rages most furiously, seeking with all his might and arts to stir up his subjects to overthrow the same, knowing full well that if *that* can be accomplished his own evil cause will be greatly furthered and the kingdom of darkness more firmly established in the world.

Just as in carnal warfare there are certain strategic centers—“key positions”—on which the security of the whole “line” depends, and just as such a strategic center is made the “military objective” by the opposing army, who are determined to capture it at all costs, so it is in connection with the great forces of good and evil. There are certain bulwarks (Isa. 48:12, 13) which are of vital importance, the maintaining of which is essential for the furtherance of true piety, for once *they* be captured the way is wide open for the hordes of wickedness to wreak their evil will. Such a “bulwark” is the Sabbath: on the strict observance of it depends the well-being of Church and State alike. To keep the Sabbath holy secures the blessing of the Most High, but the desecration thereof most assuredly calls down His curse upon a land and people.

After what has been pointed out in previous articles there is little need now for us to enter upon a lengthy proof that the Holy Sabbath is one of the principal bulwarks of Zion. Or that it constitutes one of the most vital of all “strategic centers” in the defenses of Truth and godliness, spirituality and morality. It is like a mighty fortress which guards the entrance to a pass that gives access to a vast industrial center: once that fortress be captured the millions of people living behind it in the cities are then at the mercy of the advancing foe. And just as in a military campaign the attacking general makes the demolition of that fortress his main aim, concentrating the strength of his forces against it, so it is in connection with Satan's fight against the kingdom of God upon earth: he knows full well that the overthrow of the Sabbath would mean for him a “major victory.”

To employ a rather different figure. The blessings which God has promised unto men—blessings both temporal and spiritual—flow most freely along the particular channels which He has Himself appointed. Contrariwise, if those channels be forsaken, then the blessings will also be forfeited. Now since the Sabbath is the day which the Lord has set apart for the communication of special blessing, then it is obvious that those blessings will be enjoyed in greatest measure by those who are the sincerest and strictest in its sacred observance. This is a fact which is capable of the clearest verification. Organized Christianity has been here for 1,900 years and during that lengthy span it has experienced many vicissitudes, passing through periods of prosperity on the one hand and of adversity on the other, of light and purity and darkness and impurity, of spiritual energy and of spiritual torpor.

Now it can be plainly shown from the chronicles of history that there has been to a very striking degree an unmistakable correspondence in those periods between the observance of Sabbath sanctity and the spiritual prosperity of the churches on the one hand and the neglect of the Sabbath's sanctity and spiritual declension of the churches on the other. In this we may also see parallels with the varied experiences of the nation of Israel in Old Testament times—compare our article in the May, 1939 issue. While it is true that only fragments have survived the flight of time of what was recorded in the first two or three centuries A.D., yet sufficient is extant to show that in those centuries the Lord's Day was faithfully kept by His people in caves and catacombs, surrounded by every form of peril—as witness the testimonies of Eusebius, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, etc. How far, then, was the state of the Church a flourishing one in those early days?

In seeking the answer to our last question it must be distinctly borne in mind that the prosperity of Christianity is not to be gauged by the esteem in which it is held by the world in general. Very much to the contrary. “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own; but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you” (John 15:19). Unless that Divine pronouncement be held steadily before us we are certain to arrive at an entirely wrong answer to our inquiry. The world's hatred and opposition and not the world's love and co-operation are the surest index to the spiritual prosperity of Christianity. What the early Christians suffered at the hands of Nero and others of the Roman emperors which followed him, is too well known to need any description of ours. Thousands of Christ's followers sealed their testimony with their blood, yet despite the fierce persecution encountered, the Gospel continued to be diffused far and wide.

During the course of time Satan has resorted to a great variety of tactics in his efforts to stamp out the observance of the Sabbath, employing widely different measures and methods in his determination to choke this channel of Divine blessing. He employed a strange but effective instrument in his first onslaught. The fidelity and courage of the first martyrs evoked the deep esteem of the suffering but prospering Church. But alas—such is man—the praising of the *martyrs* soon took the place of the praising of Him who had sustained them, and ere long the places where they had suffered and the graves in which their mangled remains had been interred began to be regarded with superstitious veneration. It was not long until the *days* on which they had been martyred were regarded as comparatively sacred for their memories and were set apart as holy festivals hallowed by their death.

Not only were the virtues of the martyrs eulogized, but gradually it became popular to offer up prayers—at first *for* the souls of these Christians heroes, and later *to* the martyrs *themselves* as to a species of subordinate mediators. The efforts of the Enemy proved only too successful: the calendar of the Church soon became so filled with these “saints” days that the solitary dignity of the Lord's Day was crowded out and thus the channel of Divine blessing was choked. That holy veneration which had been accorded unto the Sabbath alone was now divided and extended to a multitude of human appointments, and even before the power of pagan Rome to suppress the public observance of the Christian Sabbath had passed away, its sole sanctity had disappeared before a legion of these spurious “holy days.”

Constantine framed statutes requiring the inhabitants of cities to suspend their ordinary business and mechanics to abstain from their common labour on the Sabbath, and closed the courts of justice and all other public offices on that day—clear proof of how the early Church had been desirous to observe it. But the laws drawn up by this strange character who espoused Christianity introduced a most pernicious element: the Sabbath and the “holy festivals” of human invention were placed on the *same level*. The sequel may easily be imagined: those other “days” not being of Divine authority quickly degraded the sanctity of the Lord's Day from its sole supremacy over the consciences of the worshippers. An attempt to raise any human innovation in matters of religion to an equality with what is of *Divine* institution inevitably results in the lowering of the Divine and in the elevation of the *human* above the Divine.

What the Scriptures designate as “will worship” (Col. 2:23) is *false worship*, devised by the depraved heart of man to minister to his corrupt inclinations—under the pretence of exalted piety. Not only is this “will worship” a false one, but in proportion as it flourishes, true worship is defiled. From the days of Constantine onwards the progress of error and departure from the Truth went on with ever accelerating pace and power, until in a short time the whole year was overrun with saints' days and festivals and the Lord's Day was entirely set aside, or where it was still professedly regarded was degraded into one of recreation, amusement and festivities, of such kinds and degrees of debasement to be too sinful and shameful to describe.

It is needless to inquire whether or not the churches flourished spiritually during that time, for God cannot be mocked with impunity. The fourth and fifth centuries A.D. witnessed a sad lowering of Christian standards: the Law was no longer faithfully enforced, the Gospel was grievously corrupted, and worship became more and more paganized. It was not long ere a faithless Christendom was made to reap what it had sown, for the judgments of God ever fall upon the ecclesiastical sphere before they reach the civil (see

1 Peter 4:17). Where the Truth is rejected professors are given up by God to believe a lie. The setting up of saints' days and the degradation of the Lord's Day paved the way for the rise of the great anti-Christian power. The Roman Catholic apostasy was both the fully developed offshoot of the evils to which we have alluded, as she was also suffered by God to assume dominion as a mark of His displeasure upon an adulterous generation.

The growth and domination of the Papacy supplied a vivid demonstration of the spiritual adversity and desolation which had overtaken Christendom, and rightly have the centuries which followed been designated "the Dark Ages." No longer was the Word of God preached to the people, no longer was the Sabbath Day kept holy, no longer was the simplicity of Christian worship observed. Priestcraft poisoned every spring and the Water of life was no longer obtainable. And where was the true Church of Christ to be found during this dark season: for even then God left not Himself without true witnesses on earth. The answer is, among the Vaudois valleys of the Alps—among that poor and despised people known as the Waldensians. No sooner did the degenerate system of Popery rise to power than the humble dwellers of the Piedmont become distinguished for their firm adherence to the standards of primitive Christianity, refusing to adopt any other rule of faith than the written Word of God, and exemplifying its precepts in their daily walk to an extent that few have done since.

Those possessing any acquaintance of Church history are familiar with the tragic but glorious sequel. The rage of Rome knew no bounds against this people who witnessed so faithfully and valorously for Christ, many of whom were given the great honour of suffering severely even unto death rather than yield to the demands of the Mother of Harlots. Even though most of their writings perished in the devastating persecution which they experienced, by which Rome strove might and main to exterminate them root and branch, yet sufficient have survived to furnish proof that the Waldensian Christians were characterized by *Sabbath observance*. In "The Noble Lesson," of date about 1100, there is not only a clear avowal of the binding nature of the Moral Law—and consequently of the Fourth Commandment—but an enunciation of an important principle which shows their conception of the relation of the Law to the Gospel: "Christ did not change it that it should be abrogated, but renewed it that it might be better kept."

In the Confession of Faith of the same Church, the feasts and vigils of saints are denounced as "an unspeakable abomination." In an "Exposition of the Commandments" the following occurs, "They that will keep and observe the Sabbath of Christians, that is to say, will sanctify the day of the Lord, must be careful of four things. The first is to cease from all earthly and worldly labours: the second, not to sin; the third, not to be idle in regard to good works; and fourth, to do those things which are for the good of the soul." And in another Confession, drawn up at a later period, the following article appears: "That on Sundays we ought to cease from our worldly labours, through zeal for God, and love towards our servants, and that we may apply ourselves to hearing the Word of God." These notices are enough to prove that the Waldensian Church was definitely distinguished by its sacred observance of the Lord's Day.

And what was the religious prosperity of Christianity in the Alps in those perilous times? Most pertinent is such an inquiry after what we have affirmed above. But again we must be careful not to employ a wrong standard of measurement, as we are so liable to do in a day when it is very common to estimate values wrongly. That prosperity is not to be looked for in numbers, in social prestige, or in anything which is

highly esteemed among men; but rather in those *spiritual fruits* which are to the praise of God, because produced by the gracious operations of His Spirit. If to endure persecution as good soldiers of Jesus Christ without murmuring; if to suffer the acutest afflictions without wavering; if to experience continual persecution with an invincible patience and victorious faith be the marks of spiritual well-being, then the Waldensian Church certainly flourished spiritually.

“If to continue steadfast through a long agony of centuries, glorifying God in the midst of the furnace of persecution, even when it was heated seven times, maintaining still imperishable life and heavenly hope triumphant over all, be religious prosperity, that Church in the wilderness was marvelously prosperous. And if, in the midst of all its fiery trials, to strive to its power, and beyond its power, to act as a missionary Church, not only upholding its own testimony to the Truth, but striving to diffuse around it that priceless blessing, thus both continuing and extending true Christianity in spite of all the deadly efforts of anti-Christian Rome be religious prosperity, the faithful and zealous Waldensian Church was gloriously prosperous.

“The teaching of that Church pervaded the south of France and became instrumental there in winning many souls to Christ. Its living truths ran along the Rhine, communicating spiritual life to numbers, and preparing a way for future Gospel progress. Bohemia caught some rays of the sacred light, which in later age became the day-spring of heavenly brightness to suffering martyrs. The distant British Isles obtained some powerful life-germs, destined in due time to put forth a mighty and growing energy, not only for the protection of the suffering of the Waldenses themselves, but for the diffusion of Gospel Truth throughout the world. Such was the religious prosperity of the Bible-loving and Lord's-Day keeping Waldensian Church; and no true Christian will deny that it was a kind and measure of prosperity which God alone could have given, and the world could not take away—the full amount and value of which only the Day to come will reveal” (W. M. Hetherington, to whom we are indebted for the above quotations).—A.W.P.

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### **FAITH TO WORK MIRACLES.**

During the last century there have been two cardinal errors made concerning much that is contained in the Gospels—errors which have prevailed extensively among professing Christians and which have wrought great havoc. Each of those errors concern that interpretation and application of the contents of the four Evangelists as to what does and does not pertain to the Lord's people today. The first of these errors was a *dispensational* one. The view was falsely taken that because our Lord's ministry was confined to Palestine, while the Temple still stood in Jerusalem, it was therefore exclusively “Jewish” in its character, and that the saints of our era must turn only to the Epistles of the Apostle to the Gentiles for their marching orders. Such an error is refuted by the opening verses of Hebrews (where the ministry of Christ is contrasted from that of the Prophets) and by the fact that the great division of time between B.C. and A.D. is dated from the *birth* of Christ, and not from His death or even His ascension.

The second error is a *practical* one. Here the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. In the former case an insidious and insistent attempt was made to deprive the saints of a valuable part of their legitimate heritage, taking from them needed precepts and precious promises under the pretext they were the sole property of the Jews. But in the latter case, which is now more fully to engage our attention, promises which were made *to a particular* class have been allocated universally, promises which belonged only to the Apostles and the primitive Christians have been wrongly applied to all believers in general. The result has been that false expectations were engendered, vain hopes raised, wild fanaticism encouraged—and those who have come into contact with this perversion of the Truth have seen what tragic effects

followed—thousands making complete shipwreck of the faith.

No doubt it will seem to some of our friends that we are now treading on delicate ground, for to assure them that some of the promises made by Christ to His disciples, promises which numbers of our readers may have been taught are the legitimate grounds on which to rest their faith, *do not*—in their prime sense—*belong to them* at all, must prove disquieting and disappointing. We shall, therefore, proceed cautiously and slowly, and ask them to weigh with extra diligence what follows. “And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name shall they cast out demons, they shall speak with new tongues, they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover” (Mark 16:17, 18). Now those are the words of the Lord Jesus, but may *we* appropriate them today and expect a literal fulfillment of the same? There are those who answer with an emphatic Yes, though we very much doubt if many regular readers of these pages would do so.

Now the verses just quoted respect the miracles which attended the preaching of the Gospel in the early days of this Christian dispensation, and it is to be duly noted that those miracles resulted from the exercise of *faith*. This we think will be so evident to our readers as to occasion no difficulty. But there are other passages in the Gospels dealing with the same subject—similar promises from the lips of the Saviour which may not appear so simple—and it is to them that we now turn. “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). This same promise, slightly varied, is found again in, “Therefore I say unto you, what things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). How often has this promise been appropriated by Christians and earnestly pleaded before God, only to meet with no response. Such have attributed this lack of response to the failure of their *faith*, (or been told that is the cause), instead of perceiving they were resting their faith on an unwarrantable foundation.

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). Our first concern should be to ascertain *to whom* those words were first addressed, and the circumstance which occasioned them—considerations that are usually of first importance as aids to a true application of a verse, for if the context is ignored mistakes are sure to follow. The verses immediately preceding record our Lord's cursing of the fig tree and the effect this had upon those attending Him. Verse 20 says, “When the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away.” Mark tells us, “And Peter (the spokesman of the Apostles) calling to remembrance saith unto Him, Master, behold, the fig tree which Thou cursedst is withered away” (11:21). Then it was that Christ replied, “Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed and be thou cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:21-22).

It must be borne in mind that at an earlier date Christ had appointed 12 of His disciples to preach the Gospel and to perform miracles in confirmation of their commission. “And when He had called unto Him His twelve disciples, He gave them power against unclean spirits to cast them out and to heal all manner of sickness” (Matt. 10:1)—those miraculous powers were primarily what Paul referred to when he spoke of, “The *signs* of an Apostle were *wrought* among you” (2 Cor. 12:12). Luke tells us that, “after these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before His face into every city and place

whither He Himself would come” (10:1), bidding them “heal the sick” (v. 9). The same duly returned and declared, “even the demons are subject unto us through Thy name” (v. 17). Thus, it is quite clear that the promise of Matthew 21:22 was made to those who were in possession of *miraculous powers* and was designed for their personal encouragement.

Before proceeding further, let it be pointed out that what we are advancing in this article is no novelty of our own devising, but rather a line of interpretation (alas, unknown to many in this superficial age) given out by many eminent servants of God in the past. For example, in his notes on Matthew 21:21, 22, Thomas Scott wrote, “When Jesus observed the surprise of the disciples He again showed them the energy of faith, with a special reference to the power of *working miracles* in His name. Whenever a proper occasion offered of performing a miracle in support of their doctrine, and they went about it relying on His power and not doubting His concurrence, they would not only be enabled to perform as wonderful works as that of withering the barren fig tree, but even the Mount of Olives, which they were then passing, might, at their word be removed and cast into the sea! That is, nothing that they undertook would be impossible for them.” So also Matthew Henry said on Mark 11:22, 23, “This is to be applied first to that faith of *miracles* which the Apostles and first preachers of the Gospel were endowed with, who did wonders in things natural.”

Let us next inquire as to *the extent* of this promise: “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” Though this language be indefinite and unqualified, yet we are not warranted in drawing the conclusion that it is to be taken without any limitation. From the immediate context it is quite clear that this promise had sole respect unto the working of miracles. Christ's object was to assure His Apostles that if they prayed in faith for any supernatural gift or power in particular, that that gift or power would be granted to them. But we have no ground for believing that if those Apostles prayed for *something different*, no matter how firm their expectation, that they would receive the same. They were not justified in extending the terms of the promise any further than was warranted by the obvious design of their Master on that special occasion.

Though the Twelve had been endowed with supernatural powers yet had they prayed for the bestowment on themselves of any temporal or spiritual blessing, there was nothing whatever in this particular promise which guaranteed an answer to any such request. Like we, the Apostles and the primitive Christians were subject to poverty, disease, and all the common trials and afflictions of this present life. We have no reason to doubt that they—for they were men subject to like infirmities as we are—prayed for their removal or mitigation, yet we know from other Scriptures that their prayers respecting these things were not always granted. This at once shows us the promise of Matthew 21:22 was not a universal one, for in that case they might have sought any temporal favours with the same faith and assurance of being heard as when they prayed that miracles should be wrought by their hands.

But let us now take note of the *proviso* which our Lord laid down: “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, *believing*, ye shall receive.” The same stipulation is found again in the parallel passage: “What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). This promise made by Christ with respect to the working of miracles was thus conditioned upon the exercise of a certain kind of faith. If those unto whom it was made really acted out the requisite faith, then

their faith absolutely secured the fulfillment of the promise. On the other hand, if they failed to put forth the faith specified, then their request was not granted. Like most of the promises in Scripture, this also was a *conditional* one.

Matthew 17 furnishes us with an illustration of the Apostles being unable to perform a desired miracle because of their failure to meet the proviso attached to the promise we are here considering. There we read of a certain man coming to Christ on behalf of his sorely-vexed son, begging the Saviour to have mercy on him, and saying, "I brought him to Thy disciples and they could not cure him" (v. 16). After the Lord had healed the demon possessed youth, His disciples asked why *they* had been unable to perform this miracle. His answer is instructive, for it definitely confirms what we have said above: "And Jesus said unto them, because of your *unbelief*: for verily I say unto you, 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; and nothing shall be impossible unto you" (v. 20).

We must next inquire wherein did this faith to work miracles differ from any other kind of faith? The answer is: It rested on an entirely different foundation. In the first place, it could only be exercised by those who had been specially endowed by supernatural power to work miracles, which pertained alone to Christ's servants at the beginning of this Christian era. And in the second place, such faith had to rely implicitly upon the specific promises which Christ had made unto such, namely, that upon their counting on His assistance to enable them thereto, He would infallibly make good His word respecting the same. The same thing may be seen, as pointed out in an earlier paragraph, in the promises recorded in Mark 16:17, 18. Such were quite distinct from that faith which secures eternal life, resting upon quite another sort of promise.

In proof of what has last been said we refer to Acts 3. There we read of the beggar who had been lame from his birth asking alms of the Apostles as they were about to enter the Temple. To him Peter said, "Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I thee: in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (v. 6, and cf. "in My name" in Mark 16:17). Later, in explaining to the wondering bystanders what had happened, Peter, after charging them with delivering up the Lord Jesus to Pilate, declared that God glorified His Son adding, "and His name, through faith in His name, hath made this man strong" (Acts 3:16). Peter, then, had definitely acted faith upon such promises as had been given to the Apostles in Matthew 21:21, 22, and Mark 16:17, 18, etc.

Saving faith consists of the heart's appropriation of the Gospel: it is laying hold of Christ Himself as He is offered therein to poor sinners: it is trusting in the mercy of God in the Redeemer. But the faith to perform miracles could only be effectually exercised by those to whom special promises for the working of such had been given. Christ had endowed the Apostles with supernatural powers and had given assurance that He would assist them in the bringing of wondrous signs to pass for the glory of His name and the extension of His kingdom. And *that* promise of His was to be the ground of their faith. Thus, their faith had as definite and sure ground to rest upon as ours today in connection with eternal life. Nevertheless the former was vastly inferior to the latter. Judas had the one, but not the other. Hence Paul declares that it was possible in those days to have faith so as to "remove mountains" and yet be destitute of a holy love (1 Cor. 13:2).

After all that has been pointed out above it should be obvious that Christians at this day are quite unwarranted in applying such a promise to themselves in any case they feel inclined, and that ministers of the Gospel are seriously misleading their hearers when they say to them, “All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive them.” We are fully aware that some godly but misguided preachers *have* so misapplied this text, and that some devout believers have taken this promise for themselves. Yet this is no proof that either of them were right in so doing. We have personally attended more than one “Faith-healing service” where such a promise was “claimed” by the one in charge and have witnessed the pathetic disappointment of the sick hobbling away on their crutches at the close. How many sober-minded people were led into open infidelity by such a fiasco only the Day will reveal. Perhaps some of our readers are beginning to better grasp our meaning when we say, from time to time, Many who fail to understand the *sense* of a verse are frequently misled by the *sound* of it.

(Continued in the April issue).

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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April, 1940

### PEACE.

“Peace I leave with you, My peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you” (John 14:27). Having sought to show last month what the peace of Christ consisted of—namely, an unshakeable confidence in the Divine providence, an unchanging trust in God, and an unparalleled meekness—let us now endeavour to point out the causes of the same, or perhaps it would be better to say, the *springs* from which it proceeds, for the law of cause and effect obtains and operates just as truly in connection with His peace as it does with ours.

First His *implicit obedience to God*. Speaking by the Spirit of prophecy we find the Messiah declaring, “Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea, Thy Law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:7, 8). In Deuteronomy 10:2 Jehovah said unto Moses, “I will write on the tables the words that were in the first tables which thou brakest, and thou shalt put them in the ark.” The stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments were inscribed were deposited for safekeeping in the holy ark: and here (Psa. 40), we behold the blessed Antitype—the Law of God enshrined in the Messiah's affections—in consequence of which He perfectly and perpetually kept all the requirements of that Law in thought and word and deed. Therefore could the Lord Jesus affirm, “I do always those things that please Him” (John 8:29), and nothing is more pleasing to God than a hearty compliance with His will.

That *peace* is both the product and reward of obedience is clear from many Passages. “Great peace have they which love Thy Law” (Psa. 119:165). All who live in this world are born unto trouble (Job 5:7), much

more so must the godly expect to encounter difficulties and conflicts (Psa. 34:19). To the carnal eye no condition seems more undesirable and miserable than the state of those who serve God, yet no matter what their outward lot, peace dwells within, for “the fruit of righteousness is peace” (Isa. 32:17). But, the proportion in which that peace is enjoyed is determined by the measure of our love for and compliance with the Divine Law, for Wisdom's ways are “ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Prov. 3:17). Consequently, since the Lord Jesus had a fervent and unabated love for that Law and never forsook Wisdom's paths, perfect peace ever possessed His soul.

Second His absolute *surrender to the sovereignty of God*. Of the wicked it is said, “The way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17). And why is this? Because they are in revolt against God. The only true resting place is for our wills to be lost in God's, to meekly submit to His sovereign dispensations, to thankfully receive from His hand whatever enters our lives. Uniquely was that the case with the Lord Jesus. When favoured Capernaum despised His gracious overtures, instead of being riled thereby, He exclaimed, “Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight” (Matt. 11:26). He had placed Himself unreservedly under the government of God, consequently He accepted all afflictions as coming from His hand: “The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?” (John 18:11). When His very soul was wrung with the most acute anguish, so far from a word of complaint escaping His lips, He declared, “Father, not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42). When enduring the sufferings of the Cross—tormented by man and experiencing the wrath of God—He meekly “bowed His head,” praying for His enemies, committing His spirit into the hands of the Father.

Third, *His unclouded fellowship with the Father*. Dwelling continually in the secret place of the Most High, He abode perpetually under the shadow of the Almighty. Jehovah was the portion of His inheritance, and therefore the lines fell unto Him “in pleasant places”: setting the Lord always before Him. He knew He should not be moved (Psa. 16:5-8). Enjoying unbroken communion with God, His heart ever experienced perfect peace. “As the living Father hath sent Me, and I live by the Father (sustained by communing with Him) so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (John 6:57). “I am not alone, but I and the Father that sent Me . . . He that sent Me is *with Me*” (John 8:16, 29). He ever had the blissful consciousness of the Father's presence: “the Father is with Me” (John 16:32).

Fourth, His unshaken confidence *in the glory awaiting Him*. “Let us run with patience (fortitude) the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of faith: who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross” (Heb. 12:1, 2). The Man Christ Jesus lived in the assurance of an unseen future. He looked away from the things of time and sense, above the shows and delusions of this world, beyond its trials and sorrows, and set His affection on things in Heaven. The prospect of a future, yet certain joy, enabled Him to run His race with patience, and therefore in the immediate prospect of death He could say, “Therefore My heart is glad, and My glory rejoiceth: My flesh also shall rest in hope . . . Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand are pleasures forever more” (Psa. 16:9, 11).

“My peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.” There is no other peace like it, though the unregenerate often mistake the sleep of death, a drugged conscience, worldly prosperity, the enjoyment of temporal comforts, for the same. The fact is that none but those who are born of God can

understand or enter into this blessed truth. The peace which the world gives is a false one, it is continued by an uncertain tenure, and at the last takes away its gift, leaving its deluded votaries to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. But the Lord Jesus gives what is truly good, solid and lasting: “When He giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?” (Job 34:29).—A.W.P.

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### **THE HOLY SABBATH.**

#### 9. Its opposition.

Popery succeeded at length in well nigh wearing out the saints and exterminating all who had borne testimony against her pernicious errors. The Waldensian Church was almost wholly destroyed or silenced. A reformation was attempted in Bohemia, but it was ruthlessly suppressed. Long had the Scriptures been a sealed book, not only to the masses, but because of their gross ignorance, to many of the priests as well. There had ceased to be any Christian Sabbath in the sense of a holy rest in the lands where Romanism dominated. The Lord's Day had been degraded into a day of special recreation, amusement, public shows and exhibitions—in short, of anything and everything to the utmost possible degree distinct and remote from the very appearance of sacredness. Thus the Devil seemed to have triumphed completely.

But a mighty change was impending, one which made manifest the Lord's supremacy. As it is in the material world, so it is in the moral and spiritual realms. As the Creator has given to the sea His decree, saying, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed" (Job 38:11), so as Governor of this world He has limited the triumphs of the wicked. In the early part of the 16th century Satan received a check from which his kingdom has never fully recovered to this day. Under the Reformation the distinctive truths and principles of Christianity were once more publicly proclaimed and anti-Christian errors and practices boldly denounced.

In our day there are few who perceive the immensity of the task which confronted the Reformers, the

difficulties they had to overcome, or the perils to which they were exposed. Papal despotism had to be encountered in the very heyday of its pride and power. Her monstrous fictions, superstitions, and idolatrous rites had to be swept away before a true and pure Christianity could appear. The vital truths of Divine revelation had to be virtually re-discovered. First to be rescued and preached was the cardinal doctrine of justification by faith. Then the Bible had to be translated from the dead languages into the living tongues of many lands, and given to the people as the alone Standard of faith and sole Rule of character and conduct. Then came the tremendous task of rescuing the Lord's Day from the obscurity to which it had been consigned, when buried beneath the multitude of festival days of human invention.

The work of the Reformers was so vast, so difficult, and so arduous, and was executed under such unfavourable conditions that we need not be surprised if parts of it were not so well done as were others, or that they never themselves erred. Rather must we marvel and be thankful that so much good was accomplished under their instrumentality. In regard to the Lord's Day they failed to give a sufficiently clear and decisive exposition. While they rightly adopted the principle that the whole of the Old Testament economy was typical and had its fulfillment in the New Testament dispensation—thus disposing of the Romish figment of an official priesthood with sacrifices in the Christian Church—yet they misapplied the same principle in connection with the Sabbath. Or perhaps it would be more correct to say, they applied it in such a way as to fail in establishing the right foundations on which the sacred obligations of that day now rests.

While it is quite clear that the Reformers themselves contended for the necessity and obligation of the Christian Sabbath, maintaining the same in their own personal examples, yet it must also be admitted that they employed language and uttered sentiments which were only too susceptible of being perverted and misapplied. This in fact quickly took place, especially in the Lutheran churches. Never so sound doctrinally as the Calvinists, they soon became lax in their Sabbath observance. So much so was this the case that one reliable writer tells us, “To such a degree was this the case, that many pious men among the ministers of the Lutheran churches seem to have been in doubt whether the fierce wars which so long desolated Germany were to be regarded as the cause of the extreme Sabbath profanation which prevailed, or as judgments inflicted on the community on account of that profanation.”

The most striking and extensive demonstration of the connection between Sabbath observance and religious prosperity was seen in the British Isles in the 17th century. All who are acquainted with the history of that period know that the Puritans were particularly distinguished by their strict adherence to the sacred rest of the Lord's Day. Nor was this characteristic confined either to the Scots or to those who separated themselves from the Established Church, but pertained also to those who remained within her pale. It is not generally known that the Westminster Confession of Faith, which contains the strongest assertion of the Divine authority and inviolable sanctity of the Christian Sabbath ever produced, was framed by a body of about 120 divines of whom only four were Scottish and five were Independents—all the rest having received Episcopal ordination.

Now the very times when the sanctity of the Sabbath was most diligently maintained in England were those in which pure and spiritual religion was in its highest state of freedom and prosperity; and the men under whose instrumentality this obtained are the ones whose writings are still the most precious treasure

of English religious literature. Never was the smile of Heaven more apparent, never did true piety flourish so extensively, never has the power of the Holy Spirit been so manifest since the days of the Apostles, yet never was a season of Divine blessing so abruptly terminated. As the restoration of Charles the Second marked the overthrow of English Puritanism, so it brought in a flood of licentiousness which soon swept over the country, for unregenerate courtiers and commoners united together in throwing odium on Sabbath observance as a product of Puritanical fanaticism.

The awful effects of widespread Sabbath desecration were soon evident, for the judgments of God fell heavily upon both the religious and social life of the nation. The first half of the 18th century was marked by the most awful errors in the pulpit, spiritual death in the pew, and infidelity and profligacy amongst the masses, who were only too glad to be freed from the righteous restraints which pious legislators had placed upon them. Once again Satan had won a notable victory. But not for long was he suffered to enjoy the spoils of the same. Under the fearless preaching of George Whitefield and his fellows, revival was granted and true godliness given fresh life, and the Lord's Day was once more restored unto its rightful place.

During the 19th century the great Enemy of God and man entered upon a new campaign, seeking to undermine the foundations of this Divine institution, attacking it from the doctrinal side. He blinded the minds of those who professed to be the ministers of Christ, and alleged champions of the Truth, causing many of them to believe that the Sabbath was obsolete, pertaining not to this dispensation—and leading others to suppose that the observance of the Sabbath in this Christian era is mainly a matter of individual option, and that a much wider latitude in what they term “Christian liberty” is now permissible. In consequence thereof, Satan succeeded in banishing all witness to the Sabbath from thousands of pulpits, and caused the standard to be grievously lowered in most of the remaining ones. This acted like a poisonous leaven, the effects from which spread widely, until the rank and file of church-goers had no conscience on the subject: so long as they attended service once or twice, they felt they had fully discharged the obligations of the Lord's Day.

Little sagacity is required to foretell the effect upon the masses of such a poisoning of the ministry. To use a military figure: the muzzling of the pulpit on this vital truth was like the silencing of the guns on a fortress. “Once its cannons are put out of action, the capture of the citadel quickly follows. When those who were looked up to as the expounders of the Divine Law discredited the Sabbath, then who was left to offer real resistance to godless politicians playing fast and loose with those statutes of the realm which had once been framed for the purpose of preventing Sabbath profanation? If the rank and file of professing Christians considered they had discharged the obligations of the Sabbath merely by attending one or two religious services on that day, then need we be surprised if the irreligious masses clamoured louder and louder for a “brighter Sunday” and that those in governmental authority more and more yielded to their demands!

We shall now consider some of the arguments made use of by those who have insisted that the Sabbath pertains not to this dispensation. First, it has been asserted that the Ten Commandments were never given to anyone but the Jews. Such a postulate is most absurd. If the Moral Law be not binding upon Gentiles, then by what standard will God judge them? “Where no law is, there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). The

erroneousness of such a postulate is made clearly manifest by, “Now we know that what things soever the Law saith, it saith to them who are under the Law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God” (Rom. 3:19). Nothing could be plainer than that: the whole human race is “under the Law” and every member of it is brought in guilty by the same.

Second, it has been asserted that, whatever be the status and state of the unregenerate, yet Christians are “not under the Law, but under grace” (Rom. 6:14). Those who have read this magazine for any length of time will not be misled here by the mere *sound* of words. We have often explained their *sense*, and shown that the believer is no longer “under the Law” as a Covenant of Works, nor is he any more under its awful curse and condemnation—but as 1 Corinthians 9:21 definitely declares, he is “under the Law to Christ”—under it as a Rule of conduct. The Christian is required to “so walk even as He (the Lord Jesus) walked” (1 John 2:6), and *Christ* ever walked in perfect accord with the Moral Law (Psa. 40:8). The Holy Spirit has been given to the Christian for the express purpose of enabling him therein, the love of God being shed abroad in his heart for its fulfillment (Rom. 5:8 and 13:8-10).

It has been objected by others that the Sabbath precept in the Old Testament was entirely of a typical and ceremonial nature, looking forward to that spiritual rest which Christ should provide, and that when the substance was brought in, the shadow was done away. But were *that* the case, then the Moral Law consists of only nine and not “Ten Commandments” as Deuteronomy 4:13 specifically declares. The very fact that the Sabbath statute was incorporated into the Decalogue unequivocally denotes its essential moral character, and therefore, its lasting nature—the Fourth Commandment was, like the other nine, written by the finger of Jehovah upon the tables of stone, but no part of the ceremonial law was. Moreover, the Sabbath was instituted *long before* any part of the ceremonial law was given to Israel, before there were any types or shadows, before any promise of Christ was made. The Sabbath was appointed in Eden before the Fall, *before* there was any need for sacrifices!

Appeal has been made unto Galatians 4:10, 11 by those who are determined to banish the Sabbath from this dispensation: “Ye observe days and months and times and years. I am afraid of you, lest I have bestowed upon you labour in vain.” The reference there is to the Judaizing of the Galatian saints—to their being brought under bondage to the ceremonial law of Israel. False teachers had gone so far as to insist they must be circumcised in order to salvation: see Galatians 5:2, 6; 6:15. The “days” and “months” were those connected with the Jewish festivals, which were now obsolete: the very fact that the Holy Spirit here designated them, “the weak and beggarly elements” (Gal. 4:9) is clear proof that the Christian Sabbath was *not* there included, for it could never be described in such a way.

Appeal has also been made to, “Let no man therefore judge you in meat or in drink, or in respect of a holy day or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days” (Col. 2:16). This is the favourite verse of those who insist that the Sabbath is not binding on Christians. That they refer to such a passage shows how untenable is their position. The Greek word here for “Sabbath” is in the plural number (as the translators denoted by adding “days” in italics), which intimates it is not the weekly Sabbath or the Moral Law that is in view. Moreover, there is no definite article before “Sabbaths,” which is proof positive that the weekly Sabbath was not before the Apostle's mind. It was to things connected with the *ceremonial law* against which the Colossians were being warned, as the “meat,” “drink,” and “new moon” show.

Some have raised a silly objection drawn from the difference made by the meridian, from which it is argued it is impossible that all men could observe precisely the *same* day, and therefore God never intended they should. Now if men sailing either eastward or westward did not continually have seven days succeeding one another there would be some force in this trifle, but since the Sabbath statute simply requires from men one seventh of their time, or a seventh day, separated unto God and sanctified to His service, the objection is quite pointless. That the observance of this rest day should in all parts of the earth begin and end at the same minute, the Scriptures nowhere enjoin nor does the creation of God permit. It is sufficient that whether living in the northern or the southern hemisphere that all men observe the same *proportion* of time.

After all our articles on the Christianization of the Sabbath, especially the exposition of Hebrews 4:8-10, there is little need for us to refute seriatim the errors of those who insist that the Sabbath should, even now, be kept on Saturday rather than Sunday. The essential feature to be noted is that God requires us to set apart *one seventh of our time* and consecrate the same unto His worship. Nowhere in the Scriptures is it specified that the Lord ever commanded any people to observe the *seventh day of the week*—rather six days of work (without defining which days) followed by one of rest. Nor does the transference of the Sabbath from Saturday to Sunday involve any alteration in the Law, but merely a change in its *administration*.

It is true that the Apostles for a season, while their ministry had a special regard for the Jews (Rom. 1:16), for the conversion of that remnant among them according to the election of grace, went frequently into their synagogues on the seventh day to preach the Gospel (Acts 13:14; 16:13, etc). Yet it is evident they did so only to take opportunity of their assemblies, that they might preach to greater numbers of them, and that at a time when they were prepared to attend unto sacred things. Upon the same ground and for the same reason we find Paul endeavouring to be at Jerusalem at the feast of Pentecost (Acts 20:16). But we nowhere read that *Christians* at any time assembled together on the seventh day for the worship of God.

And now our task is completed, very imperfectly so, we are fully conscious. But if the Lord is pleased to own these feeble efforts unto a stirring up of His people for a stricter observing of this Divine ordinance and in using their influence to protest against its awful profanation, we shall not have laboured in vain.—A.W.P.

“A Sabbath well spent brings a week of content,  
And strength for the toils of the morrow:  
But a Sabbath profaned, whate'er may be gained,  
Is a certain forerunner of sorrow.”

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April, 1940

### **FAITH TO WORK MIRACLES.**

“And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive” (Matt. 21:22). We have already seen that this promise was made to those who had been endowed with supernatural powers, and that it was given for the purpose of encouraging them to exercise faith that Christ would continue to assist in their *working of miracles*, for the glory of His name and the good of His cause. We have also shown that the Apostles themselves had no warrant whatever to apply this particular promise to ordinary blessings of either a temporal or spiritual nature. It should, therefore, be quite apparent that Christians today have no right to appropriate this promise unto themselves and expect a literal fulfillment of the same. To make this still clearer, let the following considerations be carefully weighed.

Even the primitive Christians themselves were not all endowed with supernatural gifts. Proof of this is found in that statement of the Apostles, “Are all Apostles? are all Prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?” (1 Cor. 12:29-30). This is the more striking in that those extraordinary gifts abounded more copiously at Corinth than in any of the apostolic churches; yet these questions, with their strong emphasis, clearly denotes that there was *not* an equality of endowment. Paul's obvious design here was to suppress on the one hand all discontent and envy, and on the other all pride and arrogance, for he had expressly reminded them that the Spirit apportioned His gifts “to every man severally as *He* will” (v. 11).

The manifest limitation of the promise we are here considering forbids that Christians today should give it

a general and universal application: “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.” There are very few passages in Scripture where the expression “all things” is to be understood without qualification, and certainly this is not one of those few. The preceding “and” clearly connects with what is said in verse 21, and therefore must signify all such things as are *there* in view, namely, the working of miracles. As we have previously pointed out, this promise did not even give the Apostles themselves carte blanche, so that if they prayed for anything whatever (provided they did so with unshaken faith) they were infallibly assured of receiving the same. How much less, then, may ordinary Christians today give such a scope to this promise!

Scripture itself records more than one instance of pious souls earnestly supplicating God for certain things, and the Holy Spirit has conveyed no suggestion that it was because they prayed unbelievably their requests were not granted. Moses (Deut. 3:23-26) is a case in point. So also David both fasted and prayed on behalf of his sick child that it might recover, yet it died (2 Sam. 12:16-19). So, too, in this New Testament era we find that the beloved Apostle besought the Lord thrice that his thorn in the flesh might be removed (2 Cor. 12:7-9), yet it was not; though he received assurance from the Lord, “My grace is sufficient for thee”—to endure the affliction. Most certainly Paul was acquainted with this promise in Matthew 21:22! Surely, then, Christians now have no right to exercise faith in it when praying for anything.

If Christians of this day determine to appropriate Matthew 21:22 unto themselves, then they must do so on the principle that believing a thing *to be true* will *make it true*. The language used by Christ on that occasion is too clear to be mistaken: “And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive”—to the same effect is, “What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24). But this principle that believing a thing to be true necessarily makes it true is manifestly untenable and erroneous. Were I to pray for the salvation of one whom God had not eternally chosen in Christ, no believing on my part would effect his salvation: and to insist that God *should* save him, would be presumption and *not faith*. If I were seriously sick and believed God would heal me, no such believing would bring my healing to pass; and if such were not the Lord's will for me, then such “believing” would be fanaticism and not faith.

Since Christians in our day have no right to appropriate this special promise to themselves, they have no warrant to ask for any favour, whether temporal or spiritual, private or public, absolutely and unsubmitively. True prayer is not an endeavouring to bring the Divine will into subjection to ours, but a seeking to yield up our wills to God's. What the Lord has predestinated cannot be changed by any appeals of ours, for with Him there is “no variableness, neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17). God's eternal decrees were framed by perfect goodness and unerring wisdom, and therefore He has no need to forego the execution of any part of them: “But He is in one mind, and who can turn Him? and what His soul desireth, even that He doeth” (Job 23:13). It is a most grotesque and God-dishonouring idea to suppose that prayer has been appointed for the purpose of the creature's exercising his persuasive powers so as to induce the Almighty to give something He does not wish to bestow.

“This is the confidence that we have in Him: that if we ask anything *according to His will*, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14). Ah, *that* is what we need to lay hold of and act upon in this blatant and presumptuous age.

We come to the Throne of Grace not as dictators, but suppliants. We approach the One seated thereon not as equals, but as beggars. We go there not to demand our rights, but to *beg* favours. We stand not on our dignity, but bow the knee in conscious unworthiness. We present not ultimatums, but make “requests.” And those requests we do not make in a spirit of self-assertiveness, but in humble submissiveness. If we approach the Throne of Grace in a correct frame, we go there conscious of our ignorance and foolishness, fully assured that the Lord knows far better than we what it would be good to bestow upon us and what would be best to withhold from us.

God has infallibly purposed when and where and upon whom He will bestow His favour, and Christians have no right, and when in their right mind, no desire to ask Him *to alter* any of His determinations respecting either themselves or others. Consequently, since they have no means of knowing beforehand what He has decreed concerning the granting of any specific favour, they are not justified in asking Him for anything absolutely, but rather must they proffer each request with unreserved submission to His good pleasure. They may greatly desire to see the salvation of some particular person, but as they know not whether he is one of God's elect, they must not ask for it unconditionally, but subject to His Divine purpose. They may have a loved one who is seriously sick, and while it is both their duty and privilege to ask for his or her recovery, yet they must not pray for the same absolutely but in subjection to the will of God.

Christ has left us a perfect example of submission in prayer, as in everything else. Behold Him in the garden of Gethsemane—the ante-chamber of Calvary—entering upon His inconceivable sufferings. Mark His posture: He is not erect, but on His knees, and later on His face. Harken to His language: “Father, if Thou be willing, remove this cup from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done” (Luke 22:42). It was His holy *desire* for the Father to remove that awful cup from Him, if He were graciously pleased to do so; but if not—He asked that His petition might be denied and the will of His Father done. Can we in the face of *that*, my reader, come before God and insist that any request of ours be granted irrespective of whether or not it be accordant with the Divine will? No indeed, rather must we earnestly seek grace to emulate the example left us by the Redeemer.

Sad indeed is it to witness and read of much that is going on in the religious world today. Nor is it that the lawless spirit of the age has had an evil influence upon the churches: rather did the evil *begin in the churches* and later infest society generally. The Law of God was banished from the pulpits before lawlessness became so rife in the state. Irreverence characterized the pew before infidelity stalked the streets. The Most High was insulted in public prayer before it became the common thing to take His name in vain on the stage and over the air. Instead of bowing before the Throne of Grace many conducted their public “devotions” as though they themselves occupied that Throne. Genuine and unreserved submission to the Divine will is now a thing of the past save among that insignificant remnant who have been given broken and contrite hearts.

Since Christians have no right, at this date, to exercise faith in the promise of Matthew 21:22, then clearly they have no right to exercise faith in their own peculiar *feelings*. The Apostles themselves who possessed supernatural powers did not believe that all things whatsoever they asked in faith should be granted to them because they had peculiar feelings respecting what they asked for; but they believed that when they

requested a miracle should be wrought by them, Christ would enable them thereto, because they based their faith on His promise to that end. They knew that promise was made to their *faith*, and not to their feelings. That being the case with the Apostles themselves, how much less may the ordinary Christian now claim a fulfillment of Matthew 21:22 because of some strong feeling he is the subject of!

But though Christians today have no such promise to rest upon as Matthew 21:22, some of them have a *deep feeling* that what they pray for shall be granted. That is quite wrong and reprehensible. We have no Scriptural warrant whatever to base our confidence of being heard upon any feeling, however deep and persistent, and must not expect God to answer us unless we can plead some promise of His. There are no promises made in the Word to any *feelings*. All the promises of the Gospel are made to holy exercises or affections, and to nothing in which men are entirely passive. Our hearts are deceitful above all things, and those who rely upon inward impulses and secret feelings are in great danger of running into the grossest errors and the wildest delusions. Evil spirits as well as the Holy Spirit can impress our minds.

Many have prayed for particular favours with the mistaken assurance that if they ask for them in unwavering faith those favours would certainly be granted them. This idea “led George Whitefield confidently to expect what he had no right to confidently expect. He had an amiable, promising little son, whom he ardently desired and prayed might be an eminently useful minister; and he had such strong and agreeable feelings concerning him that he confidently expected that he would be what he ardently desired and prayed that he might be. But his son died when he was about four years old and the event not only disappointed him, but cured him of his error” (N. Emmons, to whom we are indebted for several thoughts in this discussion). We may add that when C. H. Spurgeon lay dying, tens of thousands fasted and offered special prayer for the sparing of his life; but as the sequel showed, such was not according to God's will.

In seeking to correct one error we must endeavour to guard against another. Though the promise of Matthew 21:22 belongs not unto us today, there are scores of promises in both the Old and New Testaments which Christians *may* lawfully take to themselves and plead before God. In those promises they have all the encouragement to pray in faith which they can reasonably desire. God has never said to the seed of Jacob, “seek ye Me in vain,” but has assured them that if they pray aright they shall be heard, and either receive what they ask for or something more for His glory and their good. In order to pray aright, they must pray with a real desire for the things they request, and with a genuine submission to the will of God whether He shall grant or deny their petitions. When a believer presents suitable petitions unto God, in a right manner, grounded on the Divine promises, then he should not doubt either His willingness or ability to grant them, either on account of his own unworthiness or because of any difficulty in the way. “If we ask any thing according to His will, He heareth us” (1 John 5:14).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1940

### **GODLY SORROW.**

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner” (2 Cor. 7:9). In his former Epistle the Apostle had sharply rebuked the Corinthians for sins which had not only been committed by them but tolerated among them. Though it be far from a pleasant task, yet it is the bounden duty of the ministers of the Gospel to rebuke sin when it is found in those under their charge. “Preach the Word: be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2). In this instance it pleased God to bless the faithful admonition of His servant, so that those to whom he wrote had been brought to mourn over and right their wrongs. It is to this repenting of theirs that Paul here alludes, in the course of which he draws an important distinction between *carnal* and *spiritual* sorrowing over sin, a distinction which it is most essential we should duly note and take to heart.

“Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance.” The preacher takes no more delight when he witnesses the anguish of those who are under conviction of sin than does the surgeon when he inflicts pain on his patients. The servants of Christ experience no pleasure in looking upon the distress of their hearers: it is only because the sinner's sorrow is a hopeful sign of his return to God and of his future happiness as the outcome, that they rejoice at such fruits of their labours. A parent, when he sees his child weeping because of his offenses, sincerely rejoices however much he sympathizes in his grief. So, too, was the Apostle made happy when he perceived that the Corinthians had sorrowed to good effect, namely, unto repentance or reformation of conduct. Here is proof that evangelical repentance

is not only a change of heart, but a transformation of life as well.

“Ye sorrowed to repentance” distinguishes two things which are often confounded. Sorrow for sin and repentance are by no means identical. Sorrow for sin may be awakened in a man, or even in an assembly, yet without any real or lasting benefit therefrom. There is a grief (from wounded pride) which produces resentment and anger against the one who reproves our wicked ways. There is a sorrow (aggravated by Satan) which results in nothing but melancholy and despair. Sorrow in itself is not repentance; neither is remorse, self-condemnation, nor external reformation. True, these are all the attendants and consequences; but repentance itself is a turning from sin to holiness. In the case here before us the Apostle rejoiced over a sorrow in the Corinthians which was followed by a putting away of those evils for which he had reproved them.

“Ye sorrowed to repentance.” Here, then, is a statement which supplies us with an invaluable criterion by means of which the quality of all real and lasting sorrow may be estimated. Grief may arise, and even reach a passionate extreme, and yet be as unproductive of any transforming effect upon its subjects as the summer dew upon the rock. Such is a self-allaying and not a self-abasing sorrow. There is a sorrowing over folly and its consequences which is nothing more than self-pity, and remorse is ever blind toward Heaven. The vital question, then, is, has our sorrow for sin issued in a genuine *repentance*? Evangelical repentance is a real change of heart, it is a radical change of views, feelings and aims, resulting in a complete and lasting change of life. Unless our sorrow causes us to put away the evils which formerly characterized us, then it is a repentance which needs to be “repented of,” for it is fruitless and valueless.

“For ye were made sorry after a godly manner.” This is explanatory of the previous clause, making known to us how it was that the Corinthians came to sorrow “to repentance.” How it behooves us, then, to diligently inquire as to exactly what is meant by this sorrowing “after a godly manner,” or as the margin gives it, “according to God.” Godly sorrow is one which has respect wholly to God, for it is one which He demands, one which He produces, and one which leads to Himself. First, it is such a sorrow as the thrice Holy One requires from those upon whom He would bestow pardon of their sins—true alike of our first conversion and of each subsequent recovery from backsliding: “repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). Though this godly sorrow to repentance is not the ground of our salvation, yet it is both a part of and a necessary condition to it. Those who repent are saved; the impenitent perish (Luke 13:5). It is that *inward* change in which salvation largely consists. Grief and humiliation for sin as sin—sin against *God*—are an essential part of those “fruits meet for repentance” (Matt. 3:8).

Second, this “godly sorrow” is produced by Divine power. It is essentially a supernatural grace. No man is born with godly sorrow in his heart as he is born with a tongue in his head. No, it is a seed of God's own setting, a flower of His planting. It is a heavenly offspring. “God maketh my heart soft” said holy Job (23:16), for none but He can make the heart tender under a sight and sense of sin. Nature can easily make one weep over worldly crosses and losses, but only Divine grace can move us to mourn over *sin*. That godly sorrow to repentance is produced by the immediate operations of the Lord is clear from the order in “Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I smote upon my thigh” (Jer. 31:19): note well it is not “after I turned,” but “after *I was* turned.” That is the language of one who has

just been renewed, quickened afresh by the Word, and who now sees light in God's light.

Third, it is such a sorrow as leads to God. All sin is a departing from God, and while the guilt of it remains upon the conscience we cannot be easy in His presence—witness Adam, who as soon as he heard the voice of the Lord God, sought to hide himself (Gen. 3:8). But when godly sorrow is wrought in the heart by God it is the means of recovery to Him, for it makes us conscious of our distance from God and of our having dishonoured and displeased Him. Necessarily so, for godly sorrow is “to repentance,” and repentance is a forsaking of sin so as to walk in newness of life. A contrite heart instinctively turns unto God, for it is the only one which possesses any title to His mercy: “A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise” (Psa. 51:17). Indeed He will not, for His promise is, “To this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My Word” (Isa. 66:2). Such a sorrowing to repentance is approved by God, for it is the product of His own grace and accomplishes its end by restoring to Himself.—A.W.P.

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### A MUTUAL COMPLAINT.

“Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when His candle shined upon my head, and when by His light I walked through darkness: as I was in the days of my youth, when the secret of God was upon my tabernacle” (Job 29:2-4). If Job here refers to the temporal prosperity which he had lost, we cannot condemn him for his complaint, neither can we commend him. It is but the expression of a natural regret, which would be felt by any man who had experienced such great reverses. But there is everywhere in the expressions which he used such a strain of spirituality, that we are inclined to believe he had more reference to the condition of his heart than to his earthly affairs. His soul was depressed: he had lost the light of God's countenance: his inward comforts were declining. his joy in the Lord was at a low ebb; this he regretted far more than anything besides.

No doubt he deplored the departure of those prosperous days when, as he words it, his roots were spread out by the waters, and the dew lay all night upon his branch; but much more did he bemoan that the lamp of the Lord no more shone upon his head, and the secret of God was not upon his tabernacle. As his spiritual regrets are far more instructive to us than his natural ones, we will turn all our attention to them. We may, without violence, appropriate Job's words to ourselves: for I fear that many of us can with great propriety take up our wailing and mourn for the days of our espousals, the happy days of our first love.

First, regrets such as those expressed in our text may and ought to be very *bitter*. If it be the loss of spiritual things that we regret, then may we say from the bottom of our hearts, “Oh that I were as in

months past.” It is a great thing for a man to be near to God; it is a very choice privilege to be admitted into the inner circle of communion, and to become God's familiar friend. Great as the privilege is, so great is the loss of it. No darkness is so dark as that which falls on eyes accustomed to the light. The poor man who was always poor is scarcely poor—but he who has fallen from the summit of greatness into the depths of poverty is poor indeed. The man who has never enjoyed communion with God knows nothing of what it must be to lose it; but he who has once been pressed upon the Saviour's bosom will mourn as long as he lives, if he is deprived of the sacred enjoyment.

The mercies which Job deplored in our text are no little ones. First, he complains that he had lost the consciousness of Divine *preservation*. He says, “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.” There are days with Christians when they can see God's hand all around them, checking them in the first approaches of sin, and setting a hedge about all their ways. Their conscience is tender, and the Spirit of God is obeyed by them; they are, therefore, kept in all their ways, the angels of God watching over them, lest they dash their foot against a stone. But when they fall into laxity of spirit and walk at a distance from God, they are not so preserved. Though kept from final and total apostasy, yet they are not kept from very grievous sin; for, like Peter who followed afar off, they may be left to deny their Master, even with oaths and cursings. If we have lost that conscious preservation of God, which once covered us from every fiery dart; if we no longer abide under the shadow of the Almighty; and feel no longer that His Truth is our shield and buckler, we have lost a joy worth worlds, and we may well deplore it with anguish of heart.

Job had also lost Divine *consolation*, for he looks back with lamentation to the time when God's candle shone upon his head, when the sun of God's love was as it were in the zenith, and cast no shadow; when he rejoiced without ceasing, and triumphed from morning to night in the God of his salvation. The joy of the Lord is our strength, the joy of the Lord is Israel's excellence; it is Heaven upon earth, and consequently, to lose it, is a calamity indeed. Who that has once been satisfied with favour, and full of the blessing of the Lord, will be content to go into the dry and thirsty land, and live far off from God? Will he not rather cry out with David, “My soul thirsteth for God: when shall I come and appear before God?” Surely his agonizing prayer will be, “Restore unto me the *joy* of Thy salvation, and uphold me with Thy free spirit.” Love to God will never be content if His face be hidden. Until the curtain be drawn aside and the King's face be seen through the lattices, the true spouse will spend her life in sighing: mourning like a dove bereaved of its mate.

Moreover, Job deplored the loss of Divine *illumination*. “By His light,” he says, “I walked through darkness,” that is to say, perplexity ceased to be perplexity: God shed such a light upon the mysteries of providence, that where others missed their path, Job, made wise by Heaven, could find it. There have been times when, to our patient faith, all things have been plain. “If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine” (John 7:17). But if we walk far off from God, then, straightway, even the precious truth of God is no more clear to us, and the dealings of God with us in providence appear to be like a maze. He is as wise as Solomon who walks with God, but he is a very fool who trusts his own understanding. All the wisdom that we have gathered by observation and experience will not supply us with sufficiency of common sense if we turn away from God. Israel, without consulting God, made a league with her enemies: she thought the case most plain when she entered into hasty alliance with the Gibeonites, but she was

duped by cunning because she asked not counsel of the Lord. In the simplest business we shall err, if we seek not direction from the Lord; yet where matters are most complicated, we shall walk wisely, if we wait for a voice from the Oracle and seek the good Shepherd's guidance. We may bitterly lament, therefore, if we have lost the Holy Spirit's light. If now the Lord answers us not, neither by His Word nor by His providence, if we wander alone, saying, "O that I knew where I might find Him," we are in an evil case.

Moreover Job had lost Divine *communion*: so it seems, for he mourned the days of his youth, when the secret of God was upon his tabernacle. Who shall tell to another what the secret of God is? Believing hearts know it, but they cannot frame to pronounce aright the words that could explain it, nor can they convey by language what the secret is. The Lord manifests Himself unto His people as He does not unto the world. We could not tell the love passages that there are between believers and their Lord—even when they are set to such sweet music as the Song of Solomon, carnal minds cannot discern their delights. They cannot plow with our heifer, and therefore they read not our riddle. As Paul in Heaven saw things which it was unlawful for a man to utter, so the believer sees things and enjoys in communion with Christ what it would not be lawful but impossible for him to tell to carnal men. Such pearls are not for swine. The spiritual discerns all things, but he himself is discerned of no man.

Now it is a high privilege, beyond all privileges, to enter into familiar intercourse with the Most High, and the man who has once possessed it, and has lost it, has a bitterer cause for regret than if, being rich, he had lost his wealth; or being famous, he had lost esteem; or being in health, he were suddenly brought to the bed of languishing. "No loss can equal the loss of Thee, my God. No eclipse is so black as the hiding of Thy face. No storm is so fierce as the letting forth of Thine indignation. It is a grief upon grief to find that Thou are not with me as in the days of old." Whenever, then, these regrets do exist, if men's hearts are as they should be, they are not mere hypocritical or superficial expressions, but they express the bitterest experiences of our human existence. "Oh that I were as in months past" is no sentimental sigh, but the voice of the innermost spirit in anguish as one who has lost his firstborn.

Secondly, but let me remind you that these regrets are not *inevitable*: that is to say, it is not absolutely necessary that a Christian should ever feel them, or be compelled to express them. It has grown to be a tradition among us, that every Christian must backslide in a measure and that growth in grace cannot be unbrokenly sustained. It is regarded by many as a law of nature that our first love must grow cold, and our early zeal must necessarily decline. I do not believe it for a moment. "The path of the just is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day," and were we watchful and careful to be near to God, there is no reason why our spiritual life should not continuously make progress both in strength and beauty. There is no inherent necessity in the Divine life itself compelling it to decline, for is it not written, "it shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life," "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"?

Grace is a living and incorruptible seed that lives and abides forever, and there is nowhere impressed upon the Divine life a law of sinning and decay. If we do falter and faint in the onward path, it is *our* sin, and it is doubly sinful to forge excuses for it. It is not to be laid upon the back of some mysterious necessity of the new nature that it should be so, but it is brought as a charge against ourselves. Nor do outward circumstances ever furnish a justification to us if we decline in grace; for under the worst conditions

believers have grown in grace; deprived of the joys of Christian fellowship and denied the comforts of the public means of grace, believers have nevertheless been known to attain to a high degree of likeness to Christ Jesus. Thrown into the midst of wicked companions and forced to hear, like righteous Lot, the filthy conversation of the ungodly, yet Christians have shone all the brighter for the surrounding darkness, and have been able to escape from a wicked and perverse generation. Certain it is that a man may be an eminent Christian and be among the poorest of the poor: poverty need not make us depart from God; and it is equally certain that a man may be rich and for all that walk with God and be distinguished for great grace. There is no lawful position of which we may say, “it compels a man to decline in grace.”

And, brethren, there is no period of our life in which it is necessary for us to go back. The young Christian, with all the strength of his animal passions, can by grace be strong and overcome the Wicked One. The Christian in middle life, surrounded with the world's cares, can prove that “this is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith.” The man immersed in business may still be baptized of the Holy Spirit. Assuredly old age offers no excuse for decline: “they shall bring forth fruit in old age: they shall be fat and flourishing, to show that the Lord is upright.” No, brethren, as Christ said to His disciples, when they would feign have sent the multitude away to buy meat, “they need not depart,” so would He say to the whole company of His people, “ye need not depart”— there is no compulsion for decline in grace. Your sun need not stand still, your moon need not wane. If you cannot add a cubit to your spiritual stature, at any rate, it need not decrease. There are no reasons written in the book of your spiritual nature why you, as a believer, should lose fellowship with God, and if you do so, take blame and shame to yourself, but do not ascribe it to *necessity*. Do not gratify your corruptions by supposing that they are licensed to prevail occasionally, neither vex your graces by conceiving that they are doomed to inevitable defeat at a certain season. The spirit that is in us lusts to evil, but the Holy Spirit is able to subdue it, and will subdue it if we yield ourselves to Him.

Thirdly, the regrets expressed in our text are exceedingly *common*, and it is only here and there that we meet with a believer who has not cause to use them. It ought not to be so, but it is so. How grievously often will the pastor hear this among other bleating of the sheep: “Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me.”

“What peaceful hours I then enjoyed,  
How sweet their memory still;  
But they have left an aching void,  
The World can never fill.”

The commonness of this lamentation may be somewhat accounted for by the universal tendency to undervalue the present and exaggerate the excellence of the past. Have you ever noticed this in natural things? We are prone to cast a partial eye upon some imaginary “good old times.” It is gone, and therefore it was good; it is here, and therefore it is dubious. In the middle of the summer we feel that the heat is so relaxing, that a frost would be the most delightful thing conceivable; we love, we say, the bracing air of winter; we are sure it is much healthier for us. Yet usually, when winter arrives, and the extreme cold sets in, we are all most anxious for the advent of spring, and we feel that somehow or other the frost is more trying to us than the heat. I met with an illustration of this tendency the other day. I went down a steep cliff

to the sea shore, and during the descent every step tried my weak knees, and I felt that going down hill was the most difficult travelling in the world. Soon I had to return from the sands, and climb the steep path again; and, when I began to pant and puff with the difficult ascent, I changed my opinion, and felt that I would a great deal sooner go down than come up.

Then again, regrets may in some case arise from a holy jealousy. The Christian, in whatever state he is, feels his own imperfection much, and laments his conscious shortcomings. Looking back, he observes with joy the work of grace in his soul, and does not, perhaps so readily recollect the then existing deficiencies of nature; hence he comes to think that the past was better than the present. He is afraid of backsliding, and therefore he jealously fears that he is so; he is so anxious to live nearer to God, so dissatisfied with his present attainments that he dares not believe that he advances, but fears that he has lost ground.

I know this in my own experience, for when lying sick I have frequently lamented that pain has distracted my mind and taken off my attention from the Word of God, and I have longed for those seasons of health when I could read, meditate, and study with pleasure; but now that I have risen up from the sick bed and am growing strong again, I frequently look back to the long nights and quiet days spent in my sick chamber, and think that it was better with me then than now; for now I am apt to be cumbered with much serving, and then I was shut up with God.

Many a man is really strong in Christ; but because he does not feel all the juvenile vivacity of his early days, he fears that spiritual decrepitude has come upon him. He is now far more solid and steadfast, if not so quick and impulsive; but the good man in his holy jealousy marks most the excellence of his juvenile piety, and forgets there were grave deficiencies in it; while in his present state he notes the deficiencies, and fears to hope that he possesses any excellence at all. We are poor judges of our own condition, and usually err on one side or the other. All graces may not flourish at the same time, and defalcations in one direction may be more than balanced by advantages in another. We may be deeper in humility, if we are not higher in delight. We may not glitter so much, and yet there may be more gold in us. The leaf may not be so green, but the fruit may be more ripe. The way may be rougher, and yet be nearer Heaven. Godly anxiety, then, may be the cause of many regrets which are, nevertheless, not warranted by any serious declension.

And let me add, that very often these regrets of ours about the past are *not wise*. It is impossible to draw a fair comparison between the various stages of Christian experience, so as to give a judicious preference to one above another. Consider, as in a parable, the seasons of the year. There are many persons who, in the midst of the beauties of spring, say, "Ah, but how fitful is the weather. These March winds and April showers come and go by such fits and starts that nothing is to be depended upon. Give me the safer glories of summer." Yet when they feel the heat of summer and wipe the sweat from their brows, they say, "After all, with all the full-blow of beauty around us, we admire more the freshness, verdure, and variety of spring. The snowdrop and the crocus coming forth as the advance-guard of the army of flowers have a superior charm about them." Now it is idle to compare spring with summer: they differ, and each has its own beauty.

We are in autumn now, and very likely instead of prizing the peculiar treasures of autumn, some will despise the peaceful Sabbath of the year, and mournfully compare yon fading leaves to funeral sermons, replete with sadness. Such will contrast summer and autumn, and exalt one above another. Now whoever shall claim precedence for any season shall have me for an opponent. They are all beautiful in their season, and each excels after its kind. Even thus it is wrong to compare the early zeal of the young Christian with the mature and mellow experiences of the older believer, and make preferences. Each is beautiful according to its time. You, dear young friend, with your intense zeal, are to be commended and imitated; but very much of your fire I am afraid arises from novelty, and you are not so strong as you are earnest: like a new-born river you are swift in current, but neither deep nor broad. And you, my more advanced friend, who are much tried and buffeted, to you it is not easy to hold on your way under great inward struggles and severe depressions, but your deeper sense of weakness, your firmer grip of Truth, your more intimate fellowship with the Lord Jesus in His sufferings, your patience and steadfastness are all lovely in the eyes of God. Be thankful, each of you, for what you have, for by the grace of God you are what you are.

After making all these deductions, however, I cannot conceive that they altogether account for the prevalence of these regrets; I am afraid the fact arises from the sad truth that many of us have seriously deteriorated in grace, have decayed in spirit, and degenerated in heart. Alas! in many cases old corruptions have fought desperately, and for awhile caused partial relapse, grace has become weak, and sin has seized the occasion for attack; so that for a time the battle is turned, and Israel's banner is trailed in the mire. With many professors, I am afraid, prayer is neglected, worldliness is uppermost, sin has come to the front, nature leads the van, and grace and holiness are in the background. It should not be so, but I am afraid, sadly afraid, it is so.

Fourth, since these regrets are exceedingly common, it is to be feared that in some cases they are very sadly *needful*. Now let the blast of the winnowing fan be felt through the congregation. Behold the Lord Himself winnows this heap. Are there not many among us who once walked humbly with God and near to Him, who have fallen into carnal security? Have we not taken it for granted that all is well with us, and are we not settled upon our lees like Moab of old? How little of heart-searching and self-examination are practiced these days! How little inquiry as to whether the root of the matter is really in us! Woe unto those who take their safety for granted, sit down in God's house and say "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord are we." Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion. Of all enemies, one of the most to be dreaded is *presumption*. To be secure in Christ is a blessing; to be secure in ourselves is a curse. Where carnal security reigns, the Spirit of God withdraws. He is seen with the humble and contrite, but He is not with the proud and self-sufficient.—C. H. Spurgeon, 1871.

(Completed in the June Issue).

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1940

### STRANGE FIRE.

How much “strange fire” there is in the religious world today, far more so than is generally realized. Fire which has not been authorized by God: fire which has not been kindled by a coal from off His altar: fire which is not sustained by the oil of the Spirit. And therefore is it “*strange* fire.” It is the energy of the *flesh* turned into a religious channel: the same energy which moves the enthusiastic amateur-politician to seek votes for his party, only directed to another end. It is the expenditure of earnest zeal, yet a zeal which is not according to knowledge. It is the enthusiasm of youth, prompting them to run without being Divinely sent. It is the engaging in “Christian service” to which God has not called them, for they have no “Thus saith the Lord” to warrant them.

When we turn to the Holy Scriptures we are at once struck by the vivid contrast between that which was ordained of God and that which now obtains so widely in Christendom. Those who are familiar with the contents of the Pentateuch must be impressed with the fullness of instruction which was given to Moses for the ordering of Divine worship and service in Israel. Nothing was unprovided for, nothing was left to the choice of the people. The Lord Himself made known His will and gave commandment accordingly. He appointed those who were to serve, He specified their particular duties, He endowed with wisdom for special tasks. Down to the minutest detail everything was to be carried out as God had bidden. None were to obtrude themselves into any sacred office: none were to usurp authority: none were to undertake duties assigned unto others. Nothing less than *death* awaited those who dared to introduce confusion into the Divine arrangements.

“Thou shalt appoint the Levites over the tabernacle of testimony, and over all the vessels thereof, and over all things that belong to it: they shall bear the tabernacle, and all the vessels thereof; and *they* shall minister unto it, and shall encamp round about the tabernacle. And when the tabernacle setteth forward, *the Levites* shall take it down; and when the tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death” (Num. 1:50, 51). Most definite was this Divine injunction, and all who belonged unto the other Tribes must submit thereto, or suffer God's unsparing judgment. No matter how spiritual, how zealous, how devoted to the glory of God, none but the Levites were allowed to have any part in conducting the services of the tabernacle.

This Divine prescription and proscription was repeated again and again. “Thou shalt appoint Aaron and his sons, and *they* shall wait on their priest's office: and the stranger that cometh nigh shall be put to death” (Num. 3:10 and see v. 38). “That no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord” (Num. 16:40). “Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of congregation, lest they bear sin, and die. But *the Levites* shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation” (Num. 18:22, 23). Nothing could be plainer: all those pertaining not to the Divinely-ordained tribe of Levi were strictly prohibited and debarred from taking any part in the services of God's house. Yet express as these orders were, some in Israel dared to defy the Lord, and in consequence, they paid for their rashness with their lives.

“And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which He commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD” (Lev. 10:1, 2). Mark it well that these men *were* of the tribe of Levi, yet they took upon themselves that which the Lord had not commanded. They “offered strange fire before the LORD,” that is, fire which He had not appointed (cf. Exo. 31:9), and therefore they were slain before Him. On another occasion we find there was a group in Israel “two hundred and fifty princes of the assembly, famous in the congregation, men of renown” led by Korah, Dathan and Abiram, who strongly resented the Divinely-appointed restriction. “They gathered themselves together against Moses and against Aaron, and said unto them, Ye take too much upon you, seeing all the congregation are holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them: wherefore then lift ye up yourselves above the congregation of the LORD?” (Num. 16:3). The sequel was solemn. (vv. 31, 32).

God is very jealous of His appointments and will not suffer them to be defied with impugny. He had given express commandment that, “None ought to carry the ark of God but the Levites: for them hath the LORD chosen to carry the ark of God” (1 Chron. 15:2). But this was ignored by David, for “they set the ark of God upon a new cart . . . and Uzzah and Ahio the sons of Abinadab drave the new cart” (2 Sam. 6:3). “And when they came to Nachon's threshingfloor, Uzzah put forth his hand to the ark of God, and took hold of it; for the oxen shook it. And the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his rashness” (vv. 6, 7). Later, David owned his fault, saying to the priests, “The Lord our God made a breach upon us, for that we sought Him *not after the due order*” (1 Chron. 15:13).—A.W.P.

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June, 1940

### **GODLY SORROW.**

It is by carefully noting the contrasts pointed by the Holy Spirit in the Scriptures that we learn to distinguish between things that radically differ. Sometimes these contrasts are implied by a qualifying term, at other times they are more expressly stated. Thus we read of “faith which worketh by love” (Gal. 5:6), a disinterested faith, that springs from a spiritual affection, which is in contrast from a self-seeking faith that proceeds from the flesh. Romans 5:5 tells of a hope that “maketh not ashamed,” which is the opposite of the hypocrite's hope that “shall perish” (Job 8:13). Another discriminating expression is “love unfeigned” (2 Cor. 6:6; 1 Peter 1:22), which denotes there is a fictitious love, such as was displayed by Judas when he betrayed the Saviour with a kiss. In like manner the Apostle speaks of the Corinthian saints being “made sorry after a godly manner” (2 Cor. 7:9), which suggests there is a mourning over sin that has its roots in nothing higher than mere nature.

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation, not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). Here the contrast implied in the former verse is definitely stated, “godly sorrow” being placed over against the “sorrow of the world.” Before we consider the latter, let us offer a few more remarks upon the former. Last month we pointed out that this “godly sorrow” is such an one as is required by the thrice holy God, which He produces, and which leads the soul to Him. Godly sorrow, then, is the badge of all the heirs of Heaven, and God Himself produces it in the hearts of His people. It needs to be pointed out that He uses means in bringing it to pass—means suited to employ with moral agents, for so far from treating with us as stocks and stones, He ever draws with the “cords of a man”

(Hosea 11:4).

First, “godly sorrow” issues from a broken and contrite heart, which is something that no man possesses by nature. On the contrary, the heart of the unregenerate is like “the nether millstone.” A miracle of grace has to be wrought before “a heart of flesh” is imparted. This is accomplished by means of the Word, under the immediate operations of the Holy Spirit. “Is not My Word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29). That speaks of an humbling and painful experience—the travail preceding the birth. Every genuine conversion is one in which the Word is received “in much affliction” (1 Thess. 1:6). That “affliction” is caused by the Truth enabling the soul to view sin as God sees it—its true nature, its heinousness, its infinite ill-desert. As sin is viewed in God's light, the soul is overwhelmed with sorrow and shame for having offended against the Divine Majesty: “against Thee, Thee only, have I sinned” (Psa. 51:4). An illustration of this is found in Acts 2: under the faithful preaching of Peter, applied by the power of the Spirit, his hearers were “pricked in their heart” and said “what shall we do?” (v. 37).

Second, “godly sorrow” issues from spiritual considerations. As the Spirit applies the Truth to the conscience and understanding, the soul is brought under the power of due apprehensions of God's perfections, and of his relation to Him. Horror and grief fill the heart when there is the recognition that a gracious God has been offended, a righteous Law violated, a precious Christ dishonoured, the Holy Spirit grieved. This it is which overwhelms the soul with shame and bows it into the dust. This it is which causes the renewed to be “pricked in their heart”—the realization that they have displeased Him whose favour they account more than life. Therefore when it is said, “the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Rom. 2:4), it means not only that it is His gracious operations that produce the repentance, but also that it is the heart's piercing consciousness of having sinned against *such goodness* that results in a radical reformation of our ways: David and Manasseh, Peter and Paul are examples of those possessed of godly sorrow.

Third, “godly sorrow” issues from an evangelical faith. It proceeds from faith as the stream from the fountain, as the branch from the root. Proof of this is found in “they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him as one mourneth for his only son” (Zech. 12:10). All gracious mourning proceeds from evangelical repentance, from believing. Nothing breaks the heart of a sinner like trustful looking to the Cross. The tears of godly sorrow ever drop from the eyes of faith. The more we are enabled to look by faith upon a pierced Christ, the more shall we mourn over our sins for having nailed Him to the tree. No one can stand under the shinings of dying Love with a frozen heart. Well did Luther ask, “What are all the palaces of the world to a contrite heart?”: in the former reside the princes of the earth, in the latter dwells the Prince of peace.

This spiritual mourning for sin is evidenced by its product: “godly sorrow *worketh repentance* to salvation.” In this verse “repentance” signifies reformation or walking in newness of life. Godly sorrow humbles the mind, meekens the heart, bends the will, causing the soul to turn from sin with horror and hatred thereof unto God. Unlawful imaginations and wrongful actions are unsparingly judged in the light of God's countenance, and there is a consequent turning from the paths of folly to walk in the ways of righteousness. Thus the outcome is conversion in the case of an alien sinner, restoration for a wandering

saint. “Godly sorrow” is not only one that is concerned for the Divine glory and is grieved where God is dishonoured, but it is also one which has a dependence upon His mercy, counting upon His pardoning grace, and therefore does it humbly but trustfully plead such a promise as, “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).

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of.” This last clause “not to be repented of” tells of the durability of that which issues from this spiritual mourning, and as no effect can be greater than its cause it announces the *lastingness* of “godly sorrow.” It is a permanent grace. So long as a real Christian continues sinning he cannot but continue grieving: “my sin is ever before me” (Psa. 51:3) must be the language of one with a quickened conscience. Not until he reaches Heaven shall all tears be removed from the saint's eyes. Nor does any believer ever regret repenting, no matter what anguish of soul may occasion and accompany it, for it is a turning from sin—the cause of all disquietude—to our true Resting-place. The sorrow of a worldling is of short duration, but the streams of spiritual contrition last as long as sin indwells the believer.—A.W.P.

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June, 1940

### A MUTUAL COMPLAINT.

My brethren, are we all clear in this respect? Do not many of God's people need to bemoan their worldliness? Once Christ was all with you, brethren; is it so, now? Once you despised the world, and condemned alike its pleasures and its frowns; but now are not the chains of worldly custom upon you? Are not many of you enslaved by fashion, and eaten up with frivolity? Do not some of you run as greedily as worldlings after the questionable enjoyments of this present life? Ought these things to be so? Can they remain so and your souls enjoy the Lord's smile? "Ye cannot serve God and mammon." "If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him." You cannot be Christ's disciple, and be in fellowship with the ungodly. Come ye out from among them: be ye separate; touch not the unclean thing: then shall ye know right joyfully that the Lord is a Father to you, and that ye are His sons and daughters. But brethren, have ye gone unto Jesus without the camp, and do ye abide there with Him? Is the line of your separation visible—aye, is it existing? Is there any separation at all? Is it not often the case that the professed people of God are mixed up with the sons of men so that you cannot discern the one from the other? If it be so with any of us, let him humble himself and let him cry in bitterness "Oh that I were as in months past."

Brothers and sisters, feel ye the breath of the winnowing fan again? How is it with you in private prayer? Are there not believers, and we hope true believers too, who are lax in devotion? The morning prayer is brief but alas! it is not fervent; the evening prayer is too often sleepy; ejaculations are few and far between; communion with Heaven is distant, suspended, almost nonexistent in many cases. Look ye to this, my brethren, let each man commune with his own heart, and be still. Think not of others just now, but let each

one consider his ways. How is it with your love to the souls of sinners? Does the tear tremble in your eye as it once did for lost souls, perishing without Christ? Alas, upon how many has a hardening influence operated. Ah, and this is true even of us ministers. We have grown professional in our service, and now we preach like automatons, wound up for a season, to run down when the discourse is over, and we have little more care for the souls of men than if they were so much dirt.

Fifth, these regrets by themselves are useless. It is unprofitable to read these words of Job and say, "Just so, that is how I feel," and then continue in the same way. If a man has neglected his business and so has lost his trade, it may mark a turn in his affairs when he says, "I wish I had been more industrious"; but if he abides in the same sloth as before, of what use is his regret? If he shall fold his arms and say, "O that I had dug that plot of land; O that I had sown that field," no harvest will come because of his lamentations. Up, man, up and labour, or you will have the sluggard's reward—rags and poverty will be your portion. If a man be in declining health, if drunkenness and riot have broken down his constitution, it may mark a salutary reform in his history if he confesses his former folly; but if his regrets end in mere expressions, will these heal him? I think not. So neither will a man, affected by spiritual decline, be restored by the mere fact of his knowing himself to be so. Let him go to the beloved Physician, drink of the waters of life again, and receive the leaves of the tree which are for the healing of the nations.

I have known some, I fear, who even satisfied themselves with expressions of regret. "Ah," say they, "I am a deep experienced man, I can go where Job went; I can mourn and lament as Job did." Remember, many have been on Job's dunghill, who knew nothing of Job's God; many have imitated David in his sins, who never followed him in his repentance. They have gone from their sin into Hell by the way of presumption, whereas David went from it to Heaven by the road of contrition and forgiveness. Never let us, merely because we feel some uneasiness within, conclude that this suffices. If in the dead of the night you should hear thieves in your house, you would not congratulate yourself because you were awake to hear them. You would waive all such comfortable reflections till the rogues were driven out and your property was safe; and so, when you know things are amiss with you, do not say, "I am satisfied, because I know it is so." Up, man, and with all the strength that God's Holy Spirit gives you, strive to drive out these traitors from your bosom, for they are robbing your soul of his best treasures.

Sixth, these regrets when they are necessary are very *humbling*. Meditate now for a minute. Think, dear brother, what was thy position in thy happiest times, in those days that are now past. Had you any love to spare then? You were zealous; were you too zealous? You were gracious; were you too gracious? Nay, in our best estate, we were very far short of what we ought to be, and yet we have gone back from even that. It was a poor attainment at the best, have we fallen even from that? During the time we have been going back, we ought to have gone forward. What enjoyments we have lost by our wanderings; what progress we have missed! As John Bunyan well puts it, when Christian fell asleep and lost his roll, he had to go back for it, and he found it very hard going back, and, moreover, he had to go on again, so that he had to traverse three times the road he need only have traversed once; and then he came in late at the gates of the palace Beautiful, and was afraid of the lions, of which he would have had no fear had not the darkness set in. We know not what we lose, when we lose growth in grace.

Alas, how much the Church has lost through us, for if the Christian becomes poor in grace, he lessens the

church's wealth of grace. We have a common exchequer as a church, and everyone who takes away his proportion from it, robs the whole. Dear brethren, how accountable are many of us for the low tone of religion in the world, especially those of us who occupy the foremost ranks. If grace be at a low ebb with us, others say, "Well, look at so and so; I am as good as he." So much in the church do we take the cue from one another, that each one of us is in a measure responsible for the low state of the whole. Some of us are very quick to see the faults of others; may it not be that those faults are our own children? Those who have little love to others generally discover that there is little love in the church, and I notice that those who complain of the inconsistencies of others, are usually the most inconsistent persons themselves. Shall I be a robber of my fellow Christian? Shall I be an injury to the cause of Christ? Shall I be a comfort unto sinners in their sin? Shall I rob Christ of His glory? I, who was saved from such depths of sin; I, who have been favoured with such enjoyments of His presence; I, that have been on Tabor's top with Him and seen Him transfigured; I, that have been in His banqueting house and have drunk out of the flagons of His love—shall I be so devoid of grace, that I shall even injure His children and make His enemies to blaspheme? Wretch that I am, to do this.

Seventh, yet these regrets may be made very *profitable* in many other ways. First, they show us what human nature is. Have we gone back so far? O, brethren, we might have gone back to perdition: we should have done so, if it had not been for the grace of God. What a marvel it is that God has borne with our ill manners, when He might justly have laid the reins on our necks, and suffered us to rush on in the road which we so often hankered after. So you see, dear brethren, what a body of death we carry with us, and what a terrible power it possesses. When you see the mischief that corruption has already done, never trust yourself, but seek for new grace every day.

Again—learn to prize what spiritual blessings yet remain. If you have such better regrets for what you have lost, hold fast what is still yours. Slip back no further, for if those slips have cost you so much, take heed that they do not ruin you. To continue presumptuous may be a proof that our profession is rotten throughout: only a holy jealousy can remove the suspicion of insincerity. Let your previous failings teach you to walk cautiously for the future. Be jealous, for you serve a jealous God. Since gray hairs may come upon you, here and there, and you may not know it, search, try yourself day by day, lest you relapse yet more.

This should teach us to live by faith, since our best attainments fail us. We rejoice today, but we may mourn tomorrow. What a mercy it is that our salvation does not depend on what we are or what we feel. Christ has finished our salvation; no man can destroy what He hath completed. Our life is hid with Christ in God, and is safe there; none can pluck us out of Jehovah's hands. Since we so frequently run aground, it is clear that we should be wrecked altogether if we went to sea in a legal vessel with self for our pilot. Let us keep to the good ship of free grace, steered by immutable faithfulness, for none other bring us to the desired haven. But oh, let that free grace fill us with ardent gratitude. Since Christ has kept us, though we could not keep ourselves, let us bless His name, and overwhelmed with obligations, let us rise with a solemn determination that we will serve Him better than we have ever done before; and may His blessed Spirit help us to make the determination a fact.

Eighth, these regrets *ought not to be continual*: they ought to be removed, decidedly removed, by an

earnest effort, made in God's strength to get back to the position which we occupied before, and to attain something better still. Dear brothers and sisters, if any of you desire now to come into the higher life, and to feel anew your first love, what shall I say to you? Go back to where you started. Do not stay discussing whether you are a Christian or not. Go to Christ as a poor guilty sinner. When the door to Heaven seems shut to me as a saint, I will get through it as a sinner, trusting in the precious blood of Jesus. Come and stand again, as though all your sins were on you still, at the foot of the cross, where still may be seen the dripping blood of the infinitely precious atonement. Saviour, I trust Thee again: guilty, more guilty than I was before, a sinful child of God, I trust Thee: “wash me thoroughly from mine iniquities, and purge me from my sin.” You will never have your graces revived, unless you go to the Cross. Begin life again. The best air for a man to breathe when he is sickly is said to be that of his birthplace: it was at Calvary we were born; it is only at Calvary we can be restored when we are declining. Do the first works; as a sinner, repair to the Saviour and ask to be restored.

Then, as a further means of health, search out the cause of your declension. Probably it was a neglect of private prayer. Where the disease began, there must the remedy be applied. Pray more earnestly, more frequently, more importunately. Or, was it a neglect of hearing the Word? Were you enticed by novelty or cleverness away from a really searching and instructive ministry? Go back, and feed on wholesome food again: perhaps that may cure the disease. Or, have you been too grasping after the world? Brother, you loved God when you had but one shop, you have two now, and are giving all your time and thoughts to business, and your soul is getting lean. Man alive, strike off some of that business, for it is a bad business that makes your soul poor. I would not check industry or enterprise for a single moment; let a man do all he can, but not at the expense of his soul. Push on, but do not push down your soul. You may buy gold too dear, and may attain a high position in this world at a cost which you may have to rue all your days. Where the mischief began there apply the remedy. And I urge upon you, and most of all upon myself, do not make excuses for yourselves; do not palliate your faults; do not say it must be so; do not compare yourselves among yourselves or you will be unwise; but to the perfect image of Christ let your hearts aspire, to the ardour of your Divine Redeemer, who loved not Himself, but loved you.

There are some here who will say, “I do not comprehend this sermon: I have no cause to look back with regret. I have always been much the same as I am. I know nothing of religion.” The day shall come when you will envy the least and most trembling believer. To you careless, Christless sinners, the day shall come when you will cry to the rocks for mercy, and beg them to conceal you from the eyes of Him whom now you dare despise. I beseech you be not high minded, lift up your horn on high, speak not so exceeding proud—bow before the Christ of God and ask Him to give you the new life. For even if that new life has declined and become sickly, it is better than the death in which you dwell. Go and seek grace of Him who alone can give it, and He will grant it you for His infinite mercy's sake. Amen.—C. H. Spurgeon, 1871.

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June, 1940

### **STRANGE FIRE.**

At a still later date it is recorded of Uzziah the king that, “When he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction: for he transgressed against the LORD his God, and went into the temple of the Lord to burn incense upon the altar of incense. And Azariah the priest went in after him, and with him fourscore priests of the LORD, that were valiant men: And they withstood Uzziah the king and said unto him, It appertaineth not unto thee, Uzziah, to burn incense unto the LORD, but to the priests the sons of Aaron, that are consecrated to burn incense: go out of the sanctuary, for thou hast trespassed; neither shall it be for thine honour from the LORD God. Then Uzziah was wroth, and had a censer in his hand to burn incense: and while he was wroth with the priests, the leprosy even rose up in his forehead before the priests in the house of the LORD . . . And Uzziah the king was a leper unto the day of his death, and dwelt in a several house” (2 Chron 26:16-19, 21). What a solemn lesson was that! How plainly it manifested the sore displeasure of the Lord against those who chafe against the restrictions which He imposes, and who determine to take upon themselves a work to which He has not called them. Yes, king though he was, yet his royal dignity could not afford shelter from Divine judgment, for God is no respecter of persons, and monarch and menial alike must obey His commands or suffer the consequences of insubordination.

Now my reader, have these unspeakably solemn incidents no message for us today? It is true that in this Christian dispensation there is no Divinely appointed class to come between the Lord and His people. It is true that all believers are “a holy priesthood to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5). But this does not mean that there are no Divinely called and Divinely qualified

officers of Christ to administer the affairs of His kingdom, and that every Christian may regard himself as entitled to preach His Gospel and administer His ordinances. No indeed: very far from it. Nothing but the utmost confusion can ensue where every Tom, Dick, and Harry pushes himself forward to perform work for which he is not qualified. The principle of “And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but *he that is called of God*” (Heb. 5:4) holds good as truly today as it did in Old Testament times.

“My brethren, be *not* many masters (R.V. “teachers”), knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation” (James 3:1). The word which is here rendered “masters” signifies “teachers” being the plural of the one used in John 3:10, “art thou a master in Israel?” “Many converts to Christianity would be desirous of the distinction of *teachers*: with a view to the credit and pre-eminence of that office, or from a mistaken idea that they could not glorify God or do good to men in other states; while perhaps they were not aware of the weight and difficulties of the work, and the solemn account which must be given of it. But they ought to know and seriously consider that teachers must stand a greater or more strict judgment than other men . . . Did men but truly weigh the importance and difficulty of the sacred ministry, the account which must be given of it, the trials and temptations to which it exposes them, they would be less forward than they sometimes are in aspiring to that distinction” (Thomas Scott).

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they *heap to themselves teachers*, having itching ears” (2 Tim. 4:3). During recent years much has been written upon the first part of this verse, but in all our reading (now more than two million pages of religious and theological literature) we do not recall having seen a single comment upon the words we have placed in italics. It is a most significant and ominous fact that the fulfillment of these two predictions have synchronized, for the rejection of “sound doctrine” and the multiplying of men who term themselves “Bible teachers” have kept pace steadily with each other. The solemn thing is that the “teachers” referred to in 2 Timothy 4:3 are not Divinely called, but self-appointed ones, and they may easily be identified by their opposition to the Truth. Not one of the “Bible teachers” we have read believes in Unconditional Election, Particular Redemption, or the Christian Sabbath!

Not only has there been a noticeable multiplication of religious “teachers” during the last 50 years, but the rank and file of professing Christians have, in many instances, been pressed into the doing of “Personal work.” In some circles of considerable prominence young Christians (of both sexes) are taught it is their bounden duty to become “soul winners,” and that only by regularly “leading sinners to Christ” can their own spiritual lives be kept in a healthy estate. Every once in a while we receive letters from those who have been brought into deep distress by such erroneous teachings. They did not feel qualified for the task, but unwilling to be thought “strange” by their friends, they ignored the instincts of modesty and propriety, and spoke to their acquaintances about Christ, only to be repulsed and made miserable through lack of “success.” Then they fear there must be something seriously wrong with themselves, seeing that God withholds His blessing from their efforts.

Of course such “teachers” and leaders make a pretence of appealing to the Scriptures in support of their vagaries. “Pretence” we say, for they cannot find a single sentence in either the Old or the New Testaments where the Lord bade the rank and file of His people to engage in any such activities. What, then, do they do? Why, they “wrest” the Word of God and wrongly “divide” the same. In the past we have

called attention to several misapplied and wrongly appropriated *promises* of the New Testament; we now direct notice to some *precepts* which are put to an entirely false use. These *promises*, as we showed, pertained only unto the Apostles and their immediate successors—so, too, the *precepts* we are to look at are given to God's official servants and not unto the saints at large.

“And He said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15). He said *unto whom?* The verse immediately preceding tells us: unto “the Eleven.” What right has any man to apply the apostolic commission promiscuously? None whatever—to do so is to play fast and loose with the Holy Word of God. In the parallel passage those whom Christ here ordered to preach the Gospel He authorized to “baptize” and to “teach” (Matt. 28:19, 20) which makes it quite clear to any God-fearing soul that such offices can only be discharged by the duly authorized ministers of God. To “preach the Gospel” is no child's play: it requires an extensive knowledge of the Scriptures, long training in the school of Christ, an experimental acquaintance with its contents, and a special endowment from on High. “Novices” are debarred from this holy vocation (1 Tim. 3:6), for instead of attempting to expound the Divine mysteries, they themselves need to be thoroughly indoctrinated.

“Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead be ye reconciled to God” (2 Cor. 5:20). Probably quite a number of our readers will be surprised to hear that such a verse as this is given a general meaning and application to all God's people and that babes in Christ (and empty professors) are told they are Christ's “ambassadors”; but we ought not to be surprised at anything in this decadent and demented age. One had thought the very term “ambassadors” would be quite enough to prevent such an excuseless mistake. An ambassador is the official representative of a potentate duly authorized to act on his sovereign's behalf. King George has his ambassador in Washington: but suppose that every British subject now residing in the U.S.A. should busy themselves in diplomatic affairs and pretend they were ambassadors of the Court of St James: not only would they serve no useful purpose, but they would mislead people and create endless confusion. And this is exactly what these “personal workers” do; *uncalled* of God, *unqualified* by the Spirit, possessing the merest smattering of the Truth, they *distort* the Gospel and *delude* those whose ears they gain.

It is at this very point that untold damage has been done. Wrongly taught themselves, holding an entirely false conception of God's purpose and His design in the Gospel, these “personal workers” have gone forth only to deceive and seduce the unwary. Telling all who will listen to them that God loves *everybody*, that Christ died for the redemption of the *whole human race*, they assure their hearers they can be saved immediately by “simply accepting Christ as your personal Saviour.” They know not that God “hatest all workers of iniquity” (Psa. 5:5), and that Christ died to “save His People from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). They say little or nothing about the requirements of God, the righteous demands of His Law, the fact that His wrath is revealed from Heaven against all unrighteousness and ungodliness (Rom. 1:18), and that the wicked must sincerely repent of and forsake their sins *before* they can obtain mercy.

This “personal work” campaign is a *cheapening* of the Gospel, a lowering of God's standard, a perverting of His Truth, and has produced a generation of unregenerate professors, who now infest the churches and assemblies. The “making of converts” is their goal, and *quantity* rather than *quality* is the great desire. We were personally acquainted with one of these personal workers, who had three years' training in a large

“Bible Institute.” He had vowed to “win a soul to Christ” every day that year. We met him after a rainy spell, and he told us the weather had sadly interfered with his schedule, for while it was so wet there was no one in the public parks whom he could accost. He was then “five souls behind,” and he told us, “I shall have to make up for lost time and win six souls to Christ today.” The tragic thing is that so few now can see anything wrong with this *blasphemous burlesque*.

It is needless to examine all the passages appealed to by these “teachers” in support of their errors, but we will look at one or two more. “He that winneth souls is wise” (Prov. 11:30). Yes, because he has been specially called, qualified, and owned of God. But let Scripture interpret Scripture: “They that be *wise* shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness, as the *stars* forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3), and as to what is signified by the “stars” Revelation 1:20 informs us. As to what is meant by the “watchman” in Ezekiel 33:2-6 the very next verse tells us, “O son of man, (the Prophet Ezekiel), I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the Word at My mouth, and warn them, for Me.”

When a sinner has been saved the Saviour's word to him is, “Return to thine house, and *show* how great things God hath done unto thee” (Luke 8:39). We are to “*show forth* the praises of Him who hath called us out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9). But is a young Christian never to open his mouth in testimony for Christ? We have not said so; but he must be very careful or otherwise he will be guilty of disobeying that Divine injunction, “Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine” (Matt. 7:6). We shall not go far wrong if we are regulated by that exhortation, “Sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man *that asketh you* a reason of the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15). Let us beware of “strange fire”—zeal which is not according to knowledge. Let us be on our guard lest the Lord has occasion to ask us, “Who hath required *this* at *your* hand?” (Isa. 1:2). Read diligently through the whole of the Epistles and see where the members of any church were exhorted to do “personal work” or seek to “win souls to Christ,” and you will find there is *not one*. Then be governed by God's Word even though all your religious associates deem you “cold,” “self-centered,” or “ensorious.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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July, 1940

### **WORLDLY SORROW.**

“For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of, but the sorrow of the world worketh death” (2 Cor. 7:10). We have already considered the nature of “godly sorrow” (see the “Godly Sorrow” articles in the May and June issues) and by what it is evidenced, namely, by a saving “repentance” or a forsaking of sin and turning unto God. It now remains for us to enquire wherein it differs from the “sorrow of the world.” This brings us to a vitally-important distinction, for all sorrow over sin is not a “godly” one, neither does it lead to evangelical repentance: evangelical repentance we say, for there is sometimes a repentance or remorse—as was displayed in the tragic case of Judas—which does not terminate in “salvation.” Such is “the sorrow of the world,” that is, the sorrow of the unregenerate, of those who are strangers unto the Lord. So far from their sorrow leading to life, it ends in death.

The sorrow of the world is the grief and mortification of disappointed worldlings, of those who know not God but whose trust is in themselves or in some arm of flesh. They have relied for prosperity from the world, and the world has sadly failed them. They have sought satisfaction from its broken cisterns, only to have their hopes dashed. The bitter springs from which their ambitions have proceeded are pride and carnal self-respect, and their motives and occasions for indulging the same are as manifold as the deceitful lusts of the flesh. But frustrated plans and defeated expectations sour and enrage, and nature's greenness is turned into the drought of unrepentant grief. So far from leading the soul to God, it fills with wrath and enmity against Him. Its miserable subjects seek consolation from the world, endeavouring to drive away serious reflections by drowning themselves in its pleasures.

The sorrow of the world does not arise from just views of sin, nor does it proceed from any concern that God has been offended. It does not lead the soul to God in true penitence, nor turn to Him for consolation. The sorrow of the unregenerate is occasioned by temporal losses, which fill them with chagrin and dismay; by crimes which incur public disgrace for their perpetrators and their families; from the squandering of a goodly heritage which terminates in poverty and despair; from wandering from the path of chastity, and in consequence losing their good name among men: from intemperance and reckless living, which ends in ruined health and vain regrets for having played the fool. In all such cases there is no contrition of heart for having violated a righteous Law, offended a kind Creator, or been an occasion of stumbling to their fellows. It is only that they are incensed at the harvest which follows their evil sowing and fretful because lack of money or health prevents them from continuing such excesses.

There are some worldly men who experience religious convictions, and they are grieved because they cannot obtain Heaven in their own way. This is seen in the case of the rich young ruler who came to Christ, but who, when he learned that denying of self was required of him, “went away sorrowful” (Matt. 19:22). There are those who have a sense of eternity, and yet are wedded to their lusts. They desire happiness hereafter, but they will not forsake their idols now, and so they are troubled. They cannot have Christ and the world—Christ for their consciences—and the world for their affections. They are unwilling to break away from the love of this world so that they might be saved in the world to come, and therefore are they grieved that they cannot have both. A pertinent case in point is that of Balaam.

Such “sorrow” as we have referred to in the above paragraph is but a superficial and transient emotion which has no lasting and spiritual effects. Alas, of its possessors it has to be said, “your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hosea 6:4). Their weeping eyes soon dry up, as we see in the cases of Esau and Ahab. Again—such sorrow is occasioned not by mourning over sin as sin, but over the retribution it brings. A solemn example of this appears in the life of Pharaoh when the Divine judgments were upon his kingdom: “Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron and said, Entreat the LORD, that He may take away the frogs from me and from my people” (Exo. 8:8). Note well it was not, “Entreat the LORD to remove my pride, my obstinacy, my hatred of His people; but only let the plague be stayed.” Contrast the prayer of David under similar circumstances: “take away the iniquity of Thy servant” (2 Sam. 24:10)—not take away the pestilence from my land!

“The sorrow of the world worketh death” because that is the appointed and inevitable fruit of the impenitent workings of an unregenerate will. It is a great mistake to suppose that the natural tendency of trial and trouble, loss and pain, is unto good. Not so: their trend is rather to excite rebellion against God. It is only when our sufferings are Divinely sanctified to us that they are made to bring forth the peaceable fruits of righteousness. Just as surely as happiness is the attendant of holiness, so misery is the certain entail of sin. When the worldling's dream of natural happiness has been dispelled by crime, by misfortune, or by the long-resisted Spirit of God, he feeds only on the sour bread of self-reproach and unblessed woe. He often willfully accelerates the desire for relief which he vainly hopes to find in death—which so far from ending his sorrow only conducts him into the blackness of darkness forever.

“The sorrow of the world worketh death”—temporal and eternal. “Death” is to be taken here in its widest

latitude, including all the disastrous consequences of sin. The results of godly sorrow are salutary, the effects of worldly sorrow are abortive and evil. They produce only ill health and distress, and are attended with no consolation or compensation. The sorrow of the world debilitates the body, disturbs peace, impairs the mind, and breaks the spirit. There is no contrite seeking unto God on the part of the suffering one, but only a fretting and murmuring against Him. The more miserable a man becomes the harder his heart: “they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of Heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds” (Rev. 16:10, 11). Worldly sorrow is the certain prelude to desperation unless God prevents, as witness the horrible cases of Saul, and Ahithophel.

How important it is, then, that we should seek grace to turn all our mourning unto a spiritual channel, that we may sorrow “after a godly manner”—with grief for having dishonoured God with a dependence on His mercy, with a purpose to henceforth obey Him. Sorrow over sin and exercise about our eternal interests will avail us nothing unless it works repentance, and even repentance may be counterfeited and so not be “unto salvation.” Unless sin be mourned over as the cause of all our suffering and God be viewed as the righteous yet merciful Author of the same, grief under afflictions produces only increasing enmity unto despair. If after prayerfully pondering these articles any of our readers are brought to grieve over the hardness of their hearts and are concerned because of their lack of godly sorrow, that is sure proof they are *not* devoid of this spiritual grace.—A.W.P.

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### **PRAYING FOR FORGIVENESS.**

“Forgive us our sins” (Luke 11:4). In view of a serious error which has been accepted by not a few professing Christians, we feel that a more detailed consideration of these words is needed than we were able to give them in our current article on Matthew 6:9-13. This error is that it is wrong for believers to ask God to pardon their sins, that it is highly dishonouring to Christ for them to do so. It may strike most of our readers as strange that any who claim to be the Lord's people should object to the using of this petition in the Family prayer: their own spiritual instincts (a burdened conscience seeking relief, and a tender heart grieved over offending a gracious God) and the clear testimony of Scripture thereon should prevent such a foolish mistake. Yet there are those who insist that a justified person ought not to pray for the pardon of his sins, since this is what God has already granted him.

Those errorists to whom we are here alluding suppose that it is as unnecessary and absurd for them to now ask God to forgive their trespasses as it would be to make request that He should choose them to eternal life, or that Christ should now render satisfaction (make an atonement) to Divine justice for the sins of His people, which He has already done. Now it is a glorious fact that the believer in Christ has been “justified from all things” (Acts 13:39) and that he “shall not come into condemnation” (John 5:24). Nevertheless these blessed declarations of the Gospel must not be used so as to nullify other aspects of the Truth equally important and vital: “having forgiven you all trespasses” (Col. 2:13) must not be interpreted in a manner which sets aside, “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). Any difficulty which the reader may experience at this point will

disappear if it be borne in mind that no such idea is presented anywhere in the Scriptures as a pardon of all sins, past, present, and to come.

Before turning to the constructive side of our subject let us seek to point out wherein the above error lies. First, it is due to confounding the purpose of God with the actual execution of the same. That all the sins of believers are pardoned in the everlasting counsels of God is blessedly true, yet our sins are not actually pardoned until we repent of the same. God determined to create from all eternity, but that determination was only realized when “in the beginning” (Gen. 1:1) of time, the heavens and the earth were actually brought into existence. God decreed the regeneration of His people, who suffered spiritual death in Adam, yet that decree is only made effectual when they are personally born again. In like manner, God willed the remission of all the sins of His people, but that decree is executed gradually, daily—as they sin and repent of the same. To talk of eternal justification or forgiveness is as senseless as to speak of eternal creation or regeneration.

Second, the above error grows out of a failure to distinguish between the impetration of Christ's atonement and the application of the same unto believers. Throughout His life, and particularly so in His death, the Lord Jesus made full and perfect satisfaction unto Divine justice on behalf of all His people's liabilities; but when do they actually enter into the good of the same? By nature they are “the children of wrath, even as others” (Eph. 2:3). On the other hand, “there is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1): but we enter Christ by a new creation (2 Cor. 5:17)—it is only *then* that we gain access to the riches of the spiritual realm. Even then, we have to sue out our interest in Christ. There is now “a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of (the heavenly) Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1): to that fountain we need to have continual recourse that we may be washed from our uncleanness.

Third, the above error arises from a failure to perceive the way wherein God gives pardon. This is not only in a way of grace, but of holiness, too. In the pardoning of sin the Lord never makes light of its enormity. Very much to the contrary. The Cross of Calvary makes unmistakably evident the exceeding sinfulness of sin in the sight of Heaven. Nor is that all. It is the special office of the Holy Spirit to convict the sinner of the heinousness of his rebellion against God, and this He does by enlightening his understanding, softening his heart, and searching his conscience. In God's light we are given to see light, so that the vileness of our condition and the excuselessness of our conduct is borne in upon us. The result is that we are pierced to the quick, made to mourn for our transgressions against a holy and gracious God, and are brought to genuine repentance before Him. Then are we in a fit state to receive His mercy.

The testimony of Scripture is harmonious throughout that repentance on the part of the sinner ever precedes the actual bestowment of pardon by God. “If they shall confess their iniquity and the iniquity of their fathers, with their trespass which they trespassed against Me, and that also they have walked contrary unto Me, and that I have also walked contrary unto them and have brought them into the land of their enemies; if then, their uncircumcised hearts *be humbled*, and they then accept of the punishment of their iniquity, then will I remember My covenant” (Lev. 26:40-42). “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long . . . I acknowledged my sin unto Thee and mine iniquity have I not hid . . . And Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa. 32:3, 5). “Whoso confesseth and forsaketh his sins

shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). “Repent ye therefore and be converted that your sins may be blotted out” (Acts 3:19). “Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee” (Acts 8:22). Alas that such verses as these have no place in most of the “evangelistic” activity of our day. Alas that so few of God's own people are now being taught that He requires them to daily renew their repentance.

God will not suffer His saints to lie down in their sins as the sow does in the mire. “Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors” (Matt. 6:12). On a previous occasion we have called attention to the significant fact that this petition in the Family prayer opens with the word “And,” thus connecting it with the previous request: “Give us this day our daily bread *and* forgive us.” Among other things this teaches us that we are just as much in need of daily forgiveness as we are of daily sustenance. The best of God's children is not so fully sanctified in this life but there is still that in him which needs Divine pardon: “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20)—both by omission and commission. Even though by grace we have a conscience void of offense both toward God and man, nevertheless we still need to pray, “Cleanse Thou me from secret (unknown) faults.”

It is plain from Holy Writ that it has been the practice of the saints in all ages to pray for the pardon of their sins. To mention but two cases David prayed, “For Thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psa. 25:11), yet in this very Psalm we find him expressing himself as a justified person: “O my God, I trust in Thee . . . Thou art the God of my salvation” (vv. 2, 5). Again we find him praying, “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Thy lovingkindness: according unto the multitude of Thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psa. 51:1), and this after having received a definite intimation from God through Nathan, “The Lord *also hath* put away thy sin” (2 Sam. 12:13). So, too, Daniel made request: “O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive” (9:19). To these may be added all those passages where believers prayed for salvation, which necessarily included an asking for the pardon of sins.

Let us now carefully inquire as to *what it is* we beg for when we ask for the forgiveness of our sins. First, for the grant of a Divine pardon. It is true that our justification may rightly be considered as an immanent act in the mind of God, that is, that from eternity He purposed not to impute sin unto His people; nevertheless Christ's righteousness is not applied unto them until they repent and believe. In this connection it is striking to note that Paul, when in a justified state, expressed his earnest desire, “That I *may* win Christ and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness of God” (Phil. 3:9). The Lord Jesus made a perfect satisfaction unto God which was accepted by Him, and therefore He was entitled to be received into Heaven and there administer His mediatory kingdom. Yet God required Him to sue out the fruits of His purchase: “Ask of Me, and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance” (Psa. 2:8). And so we are to ask for our right: “I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa. 32:5). What consequence is to be drawn? This, “for this shall everyone that is godly pray unto Thee” (v. 6).

Though God be so ready to forgive yet He requires us to call upon Him and *seek* this (as all other blessings) at His hand. Why so? Because He deals with us as a Sovereign, and therefore does He require an humble submission from us, seeking in the terms of grace. Christ was not a Mediator of our choosing,

but of God's, and therefore though justice has been fully satisfied yet the debt must be sincerely and contritely *owned* by us. Moreover, in our begging for Divine mercy we are to confess our own misery and poverty, that we are utterly unable to make any satisfaction ourselves. "If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1), and God requires us to acknowledge our complete dependence upon the advocacy of Christ. Though God provided a remedy for the bitten Israelites, yet in order to benefit therefrom they must *look unto* the brazen serpent (Num. 21:8). So it is with us now.

In this asking of God to grant us a pardon for Christ's sake we make request that He would not lay to our charge those sins which we daily commit, saying with the Psalmist, "enter not into judgment with Thy servant" (143:2), for Thou hast entered into judgment with Thy Son and laid upon Him all the iniquities of Thy people. "If Thou, LORD, shouldest mark (Hebrew: "impute") iniquities, O LORD who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee that Thou mayest be feared" (Psa. 130:3, 4). We therefore pray that God would not visit upon us the punishment which our transgressions deserve, but that on the ground of Christ's sacrifice it may be remitted us. This petition also includes the request that it may please God to spare us the governmental consequences of our sins, and that He will restore us unto full communion with Himself.

Second, in praying for the forgiveness of our sins we ask for a continuation of God's pardon. As in connection with the supply of our temporal needs we ask for a continuance of daily bread (even though our larder is well stocked), so we make request for a continuance of pardoning mercy. Sin still indwells us and the effects are not done away till we make our exit from this world. Often accusations of conscience for past sins come upon us, so that we are (for our further humbling) made to "possess the iniquities of our youth" (Job 13:26), and this makes us long for a renewal of this Divine benefit. "Remember, O LORD, Thy tender mercies and Thy lovingkindnesses, for they have been ever of old. Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to Thy mercy remember me for Thy goodness' sake, O LORD" (Psa. 25:6, 7). Thus David begged that God's past mercies might continue with him.

Third, we thereby make humble request for the *assurance and comfort* of our pardon. Strictly speaking, this is an effect or fruit of forgiveness, yet is this specially desired by the penitent believer: that "being justified by faith we may have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ" and "access by faith into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:1, 2). This is a manifestation of and realization in our hearts of the pardoning mercy of God: that we may have a comfortable sense of being washed from our sins by the precious blood of the Lamb. It is one thing for God to blot sins out of His book of remembrance, it is another for Him to remove them from our conscience. It is an additional blessing when we are "sprinkled from an evil conscience" (Heb. 10:22). David prayed for this when he said "Make me to hear joy and gladness, that the bones which Thou hast broken may rejoice . . . Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation" (Psa. 51:8, 12).—A.W.P.



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### **THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.**

The Gospel evidences itself to be Divine because it enunciates that which the mind of man could not possibly have originated. The grand truths which it proclaims are without any parallel or rival among all the schemes of human wisdom. Pre-eminently is this the case with the full-orbed Gospel of God. Alas, with scarcely an exception it is at best an attenuated Gospel which is being preached today, preaching that leaves out some of the most striking, unique and blessed features. Let the glorious tidings of redemption be told out in all their simplicity and yet profundity, their Scriptural perspicuity and perspective, and those who truly receive these glad tidings into their hearts unitedly acknowledge that it is neither exaggeration nor extravagance to designate them the Glorious Gospel. Nothing so honours and magnifies God; nothing so rejoices and satisfies believers.

Now here and there throughout the Scriptures the Spirit has graciously furnished us with brief compendiums of evangelical truth, comprising within the scope of a single verse the essential elements of the whole plan and way of salvation. Luther was wont to call these compendiums “miniature Gospels”: such an one we have in “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). This verse sets forth in most decisive language the vicarious sufferings of Christ as the satisfaction offered by Him to Divine justice for the sins of His people; the imputation of His perfect obedience unto believers as their title to eternal life; and the real Deity of Him whose righteousness becomes theirs for justification by virtue of their union with Him. These grand truths could not be expressed more clearly and tersely.

“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.” This is one of the most profound and most comprehensive statements to be found in all the Scriptures concerning the Atonement. Into it is compressed a whole treatise of theology, and therefore each clause, yea every *word* in it, calls for separate and close consideration. As we examine this most solemn and yet blessed declaration we find there are three things said therein respecting God the Father, three things predicated of God the Son in His mediatorial capacity, and three things concerning His people. So we propose to take up the contents of our passage in this order: may the heart of writer and reader alike be Divinely prepared to ponder the same, for something superior to intellectual acumen is needed when contemplating spiritual things.

The three things here mentioned of God the Father are His high sovereignty, His inflexible justice, and His amazing grace. His sovereignty is affirmed in the words, “He hath made Him to be sin for us,” and therein His supremacy appears at three points. First, in *the Person* He selected for this extraordinary transaction, namely, the Son. None but the Father possessed the right and authority to assign the Son for this awful undertaking: He alone could appoint Him to that work. As the God-man, Christ was the Servant of the Father, and in ordaining Him to the task of making expiation for sin, He demonstrated His high and absolute sovereignty over all persons and creatures. No man, no angel, no cherub or seraph—only the Son Himself, was singled out.

The sovereignty of God the Father appears, second, in the unique *legal arrangement* or constitution here alluded to: that He who was without sin should be dealt with as a sinner, and that those who were sinners should be allowed to go free of suffering their just deserts. None but He who is absolute sovereign above all can dispense the Law according to His own imperial good pleasure. Third, the sovereignty of the Father appears in *the ones selected* to be the beneficiaries of this unparalleled arrangement. Christ was not made sin for all of Adam's race, for all mankind are not made the righteousness of God in Him. It was the sovereignty of God which *elected* the persons who were to be everlastingly indebted to Christ's atoning work. Thus the whole foundation of this amazing transaction lay in the absolute sovereignty of God the Father over all persons and things, and before that sovereignty we should humbly and thankfully bow.

Next we behold here the inflexible *justice* of the Father. Scripture nowhere affirms that God was under any compulsion or moral necessity of saving His people as He did: it was solely by His mere sovereign good pleasure that He devised the method and means revealed in the Gospel. But having ordained that His Son should be “made under the law,” then it *was* imperative that the demands of the law should be fully met. It was to this end that God sent forth His Son to be a propitiation for sin, to “declare His righteousness” (Rom. 3:25). Thus, in a special manner His justice has been magnified by the death of Christ. True, God cannot act contrary to His own perfections, but the *exercise* of His justice, mercy, or any of His attributes, is regulated solely by His will: We must adhere strictly to the exact terms of Holy Writ: it is *not*, “that *can* by no means clear the guilty, but “that *will* by no means clear” them (Exo. 34:7).

The amazing *grace* of the Father manifested itself in the aim or design of this transaction, namely, that His people might be freed from sin and constituted righteous before Him. Note carefully it is not said merely that Christ was “made sin for us,” but “*He* made Him to be sin for us.” Thus the grace of the Victim is no

more conspicuous than that of Him who furnished the altar of redemption with the foreordained Lamb. Though Christ was the Father's well-beloved, the One in whom His soul delighted (Isa. 42:1), nevertheless out of unspeakable love for His people He ordained Him to be made a curse for them. O what stupendous grace that God, knowing our wretched condition, pitied us and resolved to reconcile us to Himself, by such a Priest and Sacrifice as became Him and was suited to us. O what gratitude and praise are due Him from us!—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1940

### **ACCESS TO GOD.**

The matter of our approach into the presence of God is one of vital importance, yet it is one (like so many others these days) upon which much confusion and misconception exists. We will not now attempt to canvass the principal errors pertaining thereto, for there would be little profit for either writer or reader in prosecuting such a task. Rather do we wish to call attention unto *the various aspects* of the subject, for it is failure to perceive these and hold their due balance which has resulted in the fostering of false impressions in quarters which some regard as being the most orthodox sections of Christendom. If one essential aspect of this subject be ignored, or if another one be emphasized to the virtual exclusion of everything else, then the most misleading and dangerous ideas must result therefrom.

Let us begin by asking the question, Is it possible for a depraved and defiled creature to obtain access unto the thrice Holy One? If there is one thing taught more plainly in the Scriptures than another it is that sin separates the sinner and God. This fearful fact is impressively set forth in Genesis 3:24: that flaming sword was the symbol of a sin-hating God, barring approach unto the emblem of His presence. When Jehovah appeared on Sinai, amid the most solemn manifestations of His awful presence, even the favoured Hebrews were commanded under pain of death to keep their distance from Him. An Israelite who became ceremonially unclean was rigidly excluded from the Camp. Even when the tabernacle and the temple were erected, the common people were not allowed to enter the holy places. In how many different ways did God make it evident that sin obstructed any access to Himself!

But not only does God debar the sinner from access, the sinner himself has no desire to approach unto Him—rather does he wish to flee as far as possible from His presence. A sense of sin and the guilt of it upon the conscience drives the sinner from the Lord. This fact was also solemnly exemplified at the dawn of human history—just as long as our first parents remained in dutiful subjection to their Maker, walking in obedience to His commandments, they enjoyed blissful communion with Him; but as soon as they became self-willed and rebellious, all was radically altered. After they had eaten of the forbidden fruit and they heard the voice of the Lord God in the Garden, they fled in terror, seeking to hide from Him. And thus it has been ever since.

Is there, then, no access to God for the fallen creature? If there were not we should not be engaged in writing this article. Access to God is possible—possible for the chief of sinners—but only via the appointed Mediator. As the Lord Jesus so emphatically declared, “No man cometh unto the Father but by Me” (John 14:6). It is through the Lord Jesus Christ, and by Him alone—not through priest or pope, Mary or the angels, good works or tears—that we may obtain access to God. “We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access” (Rom. 5:1, 2). In pointing this out we are covering ground which is thoroughly familiar to all our readers, truth which is still proclaimed in many places. Yet it is by no means the whole of the truth on this subject, though it is all that is presented thereon in certain quarters. It is those neglected aspects which we now desire to particularly stress.

Once again we would point out that unless we differentiate between things that differ there is bound to be confusion and error. So here. We must distinguish between the *way* of access which Christ has opened for sinners into the presence of God, the *qualifications* which are required from those entering that way, and the *exercise* of those qualifications so that the way is actually used. But the moment we mention “qualification” and the necessity for “exercising” the same, some will demur, insisting that we are thereby sounding a legalistic note and destroying the simplicity of the Gospel. Then let us ask—such objectors, Are hypocrites entitled to use that way of access which Christ has opened? Do “Christians” who exercise no faith, but simply offer cold and mechanical prayers, enter into God's presence? If the objector answers No—as honesty compels him to do—then he has granted our contention, whether or not he agrees with us in detail.

How many professing Christians do really obtain personal access to and enjoy conscious communion with the Holy One? What percentage of real Christians are actually accustomed to do so? Alas, what multitudes have been deceived by Satan into supposing that all they have to do is get down on their knees, plead the name of Christ, and automatically they obtain audience with the Most High. Not so. It still holds good that, “Behold, the LORD'S hand is not shortened that it cannot save, neither His ear heavy that it cannot hear; *but* your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:1, 2). The principles of the Divine government know no alteration, and allowed and unconfessed sins act as an impassable barrier between the soul and God as truly today as they did under the Old Testament economy. No change of dispensation modifies the requirements of God's holiness or reduces the enormity of sin.

Three things are absolutely necessary if any is to have access to God. First, he must have the legal right or title to do so. Second, he must possess the necessary moral fitness. Third, he must be spiritually and

experimentally empowered. Our legal right to approach unto God is found alone in the merits of Christ: His sacrificial work and the present exercise of His Priesthood give me title to draw near unto the Throne of Grace. But does that cover the whole matter? Is nothing more than a legal title required? Ah, the real saint knows otherwise from painful experience. How often has he entered his closet, sought audience with the Divine Majesty, pleaded the blood of Christ, yet without any conscious access. So far from any conscious approach to Him, God seems far off, and all is darkness and deadness in the soul. Like the Spouse in the Canticles, he seeks his Beloved, but finds Him not.

“Behold I go forward, but He is not there: and backward, but I cannot perceive Him. On the left hand, where He doth work, but I cannot behold Him: He hideth Himself on the right hand, that I cannot see Him” (Job 23:8, 9). Has that painful experience of Job's never been duplicated in your own? Was his case altogether exceptional? Far from it, as the recorded lamentations of others of God's children clearly show. “Why standest Thou afar off, O LORD? why hidest Thou Thyself in times of trouble?” (Psa. 10:1). Yes, even the sweet Psalmist of Israel knew what it was to feel God's distance from him and to be denied conscious access to Him. “How long wilt Thou forget me, O LORD, forever? how long wilt Thou hide Thy face from me?” (Psa. 13:1). Again and again this was his agonizing experience. And there are seasons in the history of all believers when such language is just as suitable to express their experience as Psalm 46 or Psalm 150 is suited to their cases on other occasions.

“For through Him we both have access *by one Spirit* unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18). The words we have placed in italics present another vital aspect of our subject, showing as they do the Christian's dependence upon the agency of the Holy Spirit. Herein each person of the blessed Trinity is accorded His own distinctive place in the economy of redemption: access is unto the Father, it is *through* Christ, but it is *by* the Spirit. The sinful believer can no more approach unto the Father without the gracious operations of the Spirit than he could without the mediation of the Lord Jesus. One has procured for us the legal right; the Other supplies the experimental enablement. The exercise of faith, as we shall yet see, is another essential prerequisite for drawing near to God, but the actings of faith lie not within our own unaided power—He who first imparted this heavenly gift must quicken and energize it if it is to function properly.

“For through Him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father.” What place is given to this part of the Truth in most sections of Christendom today? None at all. And even where the third Person of the Godhead is duly owned and honoured, how feebly do the saints apprehend their imperative need of the Spirit's daily working within them. His operations are essential if our leaden hearts are to be raised above the things of time and sense, if our affections are to flow forth unto their rightful Object, if faith is to be duly acted upon Him, if a sense of His presence is to be communicated unto the soul. But will the Spirit perform these gracious operations if we are indifferent as to whether or not our conduct grieves Him? If a Christian has spent his evening at the card-table or the theatre, and before retiring to rest bows his knees, will the Holy Spirit, at that time, draw out the heart of such an one and grant him conscious access to the Father?

What has just been raised brings us to still another aspect of our subject—there must be a *moral fitness* if the suppliant is to obtain access to God. Alas, that so little is heard about this in the ministry of the day. Yet the reason for this omission is not far to seek: where the dominant object is the pleasing of the hearer,

little will be said in condemnation of a carnal walk, and still less of the serious consequences thereof. But though the pulpit has become so unfaithful, God abides faithful, and He will not wink at evil doing. No, not in His own children, nor will He allow the sacred name of Christ to be used as a passport into His presence by the workers of iniquity. Is it not written, “With the pure Thou wilt show Thyself pure; and with the obstinate Thou wilt show Thyself obstinate” (Psa. 18:26); that means what it says, and says what it means.

Loose walking severs communion with God, and then will He act distantly toward us. An earthly parent (who is prudent) will not conduct himself with the same familiarity and cordiality toward a disobedient child as he will unto a dutiful one. Our folly must be repented of and humbly acknowledged before fellowship can be restored with God. Yea, even if our fault be only against a fellow-creature it must be righted before God will accept our worship: “If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matt. 5:23, 24)—how many are unable to obtain conscious access to God through failure at this very point! “Turn ye unto Me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you” (Zech. 1:3): if we would have God turn unto us in mercy we must turn unto Him in obedience.

“Therefore being justified by faith we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access *by faith* into this grace” (Rom. 5:1, 2). This brings before us still another aspect of our subject: the necessity for the *exercise* of *faith* in order to approach God. The same truth is presented again in, “In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of Him” (Eph. 3:12). Faith is the appointed means of access, for it is the hand which receives every blessing from God. Faith in God's willingness to grant us an audience, faith in the sufficiency of Christ's atoning sacrifice to provide us with the title of approach: faith in the Divine promises that if we contritely confess our sins He will cleanse us therefrom. At first a small degree of faith enables the Christian to approach unto God, but as he advances in the knowledge of his own heart and of God's hatred of sin, stronger faith needs to be exercised if we are to draw near the heavenly Throne with confidence. Yet we must be very careful not to mistake blatant presumption for holy assurance.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil (that is to say, His flesh); and having a High Priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water” (Heb. 10:19-22). This is what may be termed the classic passage on our present theme, gathering up as it does into one comprehensive statement the essential features thereof. But what a solemn example it affords of the lack of proportion which now so generally prevails: we are probably safe in saying that for every once verse 22 is quoted, verse 19 is cited 20 times. It is this *disproportion* which has distorted the Truth and led to the error mentioned by us in the earlier paragraphs. Let us now carefully examine these verses.

The passage opens by announcing that Christians have “liberty” (margin) or a “freedom with confidence” to approach unto God, this language presenting a designed contrast from the case of national Israel under the old economy. This liberty to draw near unto the heavenly Mercy-seat is “by the blood of Jesus.” The

foundation of all confidence in our access to God and the title to approach unto Him lies in the infinitely meritorious sacrifice which Christ offered unto God on our behalf, and this we must ever plead before Him. Our encouragement so to do lies in the office which our Saviour now exercises on behalf of His people, namely, “High Priest over the house of God.” This is most blessedly brought before us in, “for we have not a High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin: let us *therefore* come boldly (freely) unto the Throne of Grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:15, 16).

In what next follows in our passage we are shown the way or manner in which we are to make use of the unspeakable privilege described in verses 19-21. In other words, we are required to meet the terms of verse 22 if we are to enjoy conscious access unto the thrice holy God. First, let us draw near with “a true heart.” This is the principal qualification. A “true heart” is one that beats true unto God. It denotes sincerity in contrast from hypocrisy. It is not the reverent posture of the body or the language of the lips with which God is chiefly concerned, but rather with the heart—the seat of our affections. They who worship Him, “must worship Him in spirit and in truth,” or their performance is utterly futile. The mere outward performance of religious duties, no matter how scrupulously undertaken, is not sufficient—it is with the sincerity of our *hearts* God has chief regard to in all our approaches unto Him. God will bear with infirmities, but not with hypocrisy.

“Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith.” This makes known the principle which is to be exercised in our approaches unto God, for, “without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). None but a genuine believer can obtain access unto God: all others are rigidly excluded. There must be the actual exercise of faith in every spiritual work: “by *faith* Abel offered unto God” etc. (Heb. 11:4). The “full assurance of faith” does not here signify a firm knowledge of our sonship, but an implicit confidence in the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and priesthood. Many Hebrews who had received in general the faith of the Gospel were wavering in their minds about the Person and office of Christ and the glorious things predicated of Him by the Apostle, and therefore he stresses the fact there must be a firm conviction of the reality and efficacy of the Atonement if we are to draw near unto God.

“Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.” Here is the twofold preparation prescribed unto us for the right performance of this duty. In these expressions there is an obvious allusion unto the necessary preparations for Divine worship made by Israel under Judaism. As there were various ways in which the Jews became ceremonially and legally defiled, so there were various means appointed for their purification (Heb. 9:13). Those institutions the Apostle now applies spiritually: “our hearts” and “our bodies” signify the inward and the outward man. “Bodies washed with pure water” has no reference to baptism, but is to be understood of our members being preserved from evil and used for God. Rightly did John Owen say at the close of his exposition of these verses, “Universal sanctification upon our whole persons and the mortification in an especial manner of outward sins are required of us in our drawing nigh unto God.”

“Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” has reference to an efficacious application of the blood of Christ unto sanctification or internal purification, so that the burden of guilt is removed. This is

accomplished originally in the communication of regenerating grace at the new birth, and is repeated whenever the Spirit grants a fresh renewal and experience of the virtues of the Atonement. That a good conscience is an indispensable qualification for access to God is seen from, “How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God” (Heb. 9:14), where “serve” signifies communion and worship. When the conscience is unpurged, the weight of condemnation lies so heavily upon it that we are then at a loss in approaching the Holy One.

Now to sum up. It is one thing to know theoretically the legal way and right of approach unto God, but it is quite another to enjoy conscious access to Him. For that, the aid of the Spirit is imperative, but He will not perform His gracious operations within us if He be grieved. If we have spent the night in ransacking the newspapers, in worldly conversation, or in backbiting the servants and saints of God, think you that the Holy Spirit will draw out your heart unto the Father when you perform your evening devotions? Not so, unless you penitently confess those sins, and sincerely determine there shall be no repetition of them. “Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you” (James 4:8). What has been before us was strikingly foreshadowed of old in connection with the approach of Israel's priests unto God: first the blood was applied to their persons, then the oil (emblem of the Spirit), and then they washed at the laver.—A.W.P.

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August, 1940

### **PATIENCE.**

“As I gathered from your letter that the Lord Himself had been your Teacher, in an *immediate* way, not by the usual means, He, no doubt, continues that good work He has begun, and in His own way, for His work is all of a piece and, like His Word, is perfect; and in no two does it appear alike in all its circumstances, though in substance the same. Every man has his peculiar measure of faith and grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Some have trials different from others, but all have a corrupt nature, a never-ceasing adversary, and a wicked world to pass through and contend with. Many set off to run through this host in hope of obtaining the prize at the end, for it is the good thing at the end that sets all off who run in the race that is *not to the swift*. Legal obedience never made a man run. The fear of destruction drives them to their service, and the terrible majesty of God, clothed in clouds and darkness, urges them to their duty, and self-will and self-pleasing help them on. David says, 'I will run the way of Thy commandments, when Thou shalt enlarge my heart.' It is a sense of the Lord's *goodness*, felt now, that animates us to run after His everlasting favour and life. But this must be run with patience: 'Know ye not that they which run in a race, run all, but *one* receiveth the prize? So run that ye may obtain.'

“Many have started with me whom I have *envied*, and looking at one and another, have secretly and openly repined that I have not this man's strength, and that man's liveliness; making sure that they must obtain. Then one has outstripped me a vast way, and I have apparently lost ground by looking at the different competitors, and have concluded that let him who might receive the prize, I never should; so has my heart fretted against the Lord, because He has not given *me* what I have seen and admired in *others*.

But after a while I have seen the strongest stand still, unable to go on; and finding they could not succeed, out of envy and malice, through disappointment, have given up, and wandered from the way of understanding; others have held on, but gradually grown feeble, lost their vigour and alacrity through the entanglements of the world, and at last, when almost apparently at the point when they should receive, have been left destitute of that faith by which we enter into rest.

“Some keep on, as Paul says, from mere envy and strife, and are never so much alive, so strong, so zealous, and so earnest, as when they have a saint to revile, to oppose; and all of this in pretense of love to Christ, supposing to add affliction to our bonds. And after all this I remain, and am obliged to look within at the work of the Lord in me, and every examination and proof only serves to make me satisfied from myself, not with myself, but *from* myself, from that fountain of Israel, which, in Christ Jesus, I have ever found when needed in my heart; and I believe some of it has run out and refreshed others also.

“And now I find that I much need *patience*, to let everyone go on his own pace, *envying none*, but to be content with the portion appointed for me, and to bear up under all the disappointments, vexations, burdens and troubles I meet with, often thinking I stand quite still, or rather am driven back, but, upon the whole, find this to be true, 'Having obtained help of God, I continue to this day.' But nothing does allure, animate, or communicate strength save our Lord Jesus Christ; therefore I look to Him as the Author and Finisher of my faith, through the grace that is given unto me, and a view of His love in undertaking and finishing for me the whole of my salvation, attended with a rich experience in my soul, which wonderfully charms, draws, and invigorates my spirit, till I forget the difficulties, in the kindness of Him who bears me up and bears me along.

“As to perplexing ourselves with anything beside (if there were anything beside them) the keeping these two commandments, it is fruitless: 'Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ,' and 'love one another' as He hath given us commandment; these are the only two things which John says are not grievous, they bring no trouble nor disappointment in themselves, though to keep them must be in opposition to the most dreadful enemies of our Lord. But He who gives us power to believe, and teaches us to love, also keeps us, and that as the apple of the eye. We are made the tenderest part of Himself, by union with Him; and in us and through us the glory of God and of His Son shines forth with lustre to all eternity, all His perfections being in us—'out of *Zion*, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.' It is His gentleness which is His eyelid, and which preserves or keeps us. How insensible is the twinkling of the eye, yet most effectual. We do not always observe it, because it is momentary.

“The Lord preserved David withersoever he went, and he says it was His *gentleness* made him great. But when observed, there is a sweet peace, quietness, and unction attended with a clear and blessed discovery and vision of the goodness of the Lord, and we can plainly make out what the Psalmist means, when he says, 'The Lord's eyelids try the children of men'—since His gentleness, goodness, and peaceableness have never met with any other return than perverseness, rebellion, enmity, and ingratitude. The hardness and impenitence of the heart none know but they who understand the *goodness* of the Lord, and are brought to loathe themselves for their iniquity, and then they can see and feel that of all injured beings, God stands first and most; yet does this place Him in the most honourable and admirable of all points of view, secures to Himself a full justification, and brings all the guilt of sin and all the charge of destruction upon the

sinners among men; so that all flesh must be silent when He rises up out of His holy habitation.”—Letter by W. J. Brook.

*Spiritual* patience is something more than a passive grace which enables us to meekly endure trials and quietly wait the Lord's deliverance. It is also an active principle which causes us to *run* the race set before us, which prompts us to persevere in the face of discouragements, which moves us to hope unto the end. It must not be mistaken for that *natural* listlessness or fatalistic inertia which is often wrongly termed “patience.”—A.W.P.

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### THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

“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). This verse contains a brief epitome of the whole plan of salvation. It states what God has done for the justification of His people, and therefore it is of special interest as presenting in concise form the testimony of the Spirit on that all-important subject. Every word in it calls for separate consideration, prayerful and most careful consideration, for an erroneous understanding of any of its clauses will involve us in fundamental and vile error. On the other hand, if the Lord be pleased to open up this verse to our spiritual perceptions, we cannot but be filled with wonderment and praise—with awe and fervent thanksgiving.

Last month we observed that our passage presents to us three things regarding God the Father, and now we are to notice the three things which it contains concerning the Son: these are His purity, His sufferings, and His merits. First, His ineffable innocence: He “knew no sin.” The immaculate purity of Christ is a most delightful subject of meditation, living as we are in an evil world and harassed by the sink of iniquity which still indwells us. Three inspired declarations need to be particularly weighed in this connection: “in Him is no sin” (1 John 3:5), “who did no sin” (1 Peter 2:22), “who knew no sin.” Christ was the Lamb of God “without blemish and without spot”: as such He was “holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners” (Heb. 7:26).

By His miraculous conception the Lord Christ was exempted from the contagion of original sin which

defiles every fallen descendant of Adam. To Mary it was said, “The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: *therefore* also that *holy thing* which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The purity of Christ was immaculate, impeccable, immutable. He was free from any actual transgression: though the hottest of Satan's fiery darts were shot at Him, yet there was not the slightest defect in His holiness: “The prince of this world cometh, and hath *nothing* in Me” (John 14:30). Though subjected to the greatest indignities, and the strongest provocations, yet, “He did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth.” To the worst of His enemies He issued this challenge: “Which of you convinceth Me of sin?” (John 8:46).

But this expression “who *knew* no sin” goes even further than those we have glanced at above, for it conveys far more than the bare assertion that Christ was sinless: it places Him at the greatest possible distance from sin. This emphatic assertion that He “knew no sin” can only be rightly understood as we balance it against the opposing clause—“that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Now we “know” righteousness only as something which is entirely foreign to our nature as fallen creatures, and have no subjective apprehension of it until we are justified by faith: in like manner Christ “knew” sin only as something which was absolutely foreign to His nature, as something entirely apart from Himself, as something which as the Holy One He utterly abhorred, and of which He had no subjective consciousness until our sins were laid upon Him.

The incalculable *sufferings* of Christ are here summarized in the words, “made to be sin for us,” which is a comprehensive expression including the whole of what the Saviour was called upon to endure while making atonement for His people. But before examining this unspeakably solemn word let it first be pointed out that, to be without sin was an indispensable qualification of Christ's becoming our sin-bearer—dimly foreshadowed under the ceremonial law where only animals that were, “without blemish” could be used for sacrificial purposes. Our High Priest had to be entirely without any personal sin in order to offer an unspotted sacrifice to satisfy God's justice and merit His favour. Second, it must also be most clearly understood that in being “made sin for us” the immaculate nature of the Redeemer underwent no change, nor was the holiness of His Person sullied to the slightest degree. He took upon Him neither the taint nor pollution of sin: His peerless perfections and glory remained unspotted throughout.

“He hath made Him (to be) sin for us.” What an amazing statement is this, and how unspeakably solemn. Who with the fear of God in his heart would ever have dared to make such a predication were he not first assured of its verity from Holy Writ: that the Holy One should be “made sin.” This does not mean that Christ was made sin experimentally, but rather judicially; not by impartation but by imputation. The Greek word which is here rendered “made” (*poieo*) is the one found in, “I will make you fishers of men” (Matt. 4:19)—something which they were not formerly and naturally. In Mark 3:14 the same word is translated “and He *ordained* twelve that they should be with Him.” It occurs again in connection with the Saviour in “God hath *made* that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36), which refers not to His nature and condition, but to His status and position.

The usage of “*poieo*” in the above passages helps us to gather the force of it in “He hath made Him to be sin”: God ordained and ordered that His Son should be made sin—He *appointed* that Christ should be legally *constituted* such. But what is meant by God's having constituted Christ “sin”? To be a sin-offering

say some, to bear its penalty say others. But neither of these explanations go back far enough: nothing could be made an expiatory sacrifice unless and until sin had been imputed to it; and punishment necessarily presupposes guilt, for the innocent cannot be justly penalized. The key which unlocks this mystery is found in the words “the Lord hath laid on Him (the Mediator) the iniquity (not of “all” but) of *us* all” (Isa. 53:6). The *guilt* of all the sins of God's people was charged to the account of the Redeemer, and the Law dealt with Him accordingly.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1940

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

It is scarcely surprising that far less has been written upon the justice of God than upon some of the other Divine perfections. We are accustomed to turn our thoughts unto those objects and subjects which afford us the most pleasure, and to avoid those which render us uneasy. But no servant of the Lord should be guilty of pandering to this tendency. Rather must he endeavour with all his might to declare “all the counsel of God” and to portray the Divine character just as it is set forth in Holy Writ. He must not conceal a single feature thereof, no matter how awe-inspiring it is or how repellent to the fallen creature. It is impossible for us to entertain right conceptions of God unless we have before us a full-orbed sight of His varied excellencies. To view Him only as “Love”; to refuse to contemplate Him as “Light”—will necessarily result in our manufacturing a false God in our imaginations, a caricature of the true and living God.

God is a Being possessed of *every* excellence. Not one of them could be lacking without changing His character, and therefore if any one of them is either unintentionally or deliberately omitted, then the object of contemplation is not the true God, but a figment which is the outcome of our misconception. Yet while we are required to acknowledge all the Divine attributes, nevertheless they do not all produce the same effect in our heart and mind. Some are objects of pleasure, but others fill us with awe and fear. Divine wisdom delights us with the wonders of its production and the marvels of its contrivance. Divine goodness charms us with the richness and variety of its gifts. As we contemplate God as a gracious Benefactor, joy is awakened within us, and as we perceive Him ministering to our numerous needs we are filled with

gratitude. But when we turn our thoughts unto the immaculate holiness of the Divine nature and the inflexible justice of His moral government, a different order of sentiments is evoked.

When the human mind is focussed upon the ineffable purity of God and His unchanging righteousness it appears to fallen creatures that He no longer smiles, but frowns upon his works. That easy, peaceable disposition—so pleasing to our hearts, so soothing when we feel the stirrings of conscience—in which we contemplate God while considering His goodness *alone*, gives place to far sterner aspects, and we are made to tremble when He is also seen as an offended Ruler and Judge. Guilty sinners have no desire to cultivate a closer acquaintance with One who is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13), and whose wrath is “revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” (Rom. 1:18). Such a view is terrifying, and they would readily flee to the most distant place if they could escape His awful presence. In the sight of holy angels justice gives a firmness and consistency to the Divine character, but the criminal dreads justice and the Divine justice most of all, since it is far more formidable and inexorable than man's.

But however distasteful Divine justice may be to the fallen creature, the interests of Truth and not the pleasing of his hearers must be the principal aim of the preacher. If he is regulated by the Scriptures and not by maudlin sentiment, he will be preserved from one-sided and misrepresenting conceptions of Deity, and he will not hesitate to declare that God is just, as well as wise, and good—that He is not only the Creator and Preserver of the world but also its Governor. And that as power and wisdom are requisite to the guidance and maintenance of inanimate nature, so justice is equally indispensable for the government of intelligent and moral agents who are the proper subjects of law and will therefore require to be rewarded or punished. As another has rightly pointed out, “To deny God's justice is to wrest the sceptre from His hand and to expose His government to contempt and insult by proclaiming impunity to its subjects.”

Above we have stated that the Divine justice is far more formidable than man's and that because of this it is so much dreaded by the guilty. The justice of God is the justice of One who is both omniscient and omnipotent, so that it is impossible we should conceal from Him our offenses or escape from the execution of His sentence. God is possessed of both infinitely complete knowledge of every detail of our lives and of the most absolute power to enforce His verdicts. Frightful as it is for a guilty creature to contemplate *such* justice, yet woe be unto the preacher who from the fear of man or from coveting his praise, deliberately softens down the Divine justice so as to cause less alarm. Woe be to the preacher who attempts to show God's justice is not so formidable as some harsh and gloomy minds have declared, or that it will not mark our sins with extreme strictness, or not rigidly insist upon its demands, or that when it is displeased it may easily be pacified.

Never was there a greater need for the ministers of the Gospel to proclaim the inflexible justice of God than in the evil days in which our lot has fallen. Not only is God Himself insulted and grossly dishonoured by the perversions of His character which have been so widely promulgated during the last few decades, but multitudes of people have been fatally deceived thereby, until a generation has now arisen to whom the Deity of Holy Writ is the “unknown God.” All around us are those who have so erroneous an idea of the Divine clemency that they suppose God is as easy-going as the modern parent and as lax as many of our

judges. They suppose that only in the most extreme and exceptional cases (if indeed then) will He punish the crimes of any with everlasting fire. By such ungrounded assumptions do they stifle any occasional convictions of conscience and steal their hearts against any apprehensions of danger which may visit them, persuading themselves that God is so full of mercy His justice is virtually inoperative.

But if the consideration of God's justice fills the unbeliever with dislike and dismay, it is far otherwise with those in Christ. In very early times Abraham consoled himself with the fact that "The judge of all the earth" would assuredly "do right" (Gen. 18:25). In his wondrous song Moses declared, "I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God. He is the Rock, His work is perfect: for all His ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is He" (Deut. 32:3, 4). David extolled his God as, "The LORD is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works" (Psa. 145:17). Most remarkable is that word in Jeremiah where the Lord is designated "the Habitation of justice" (50:7) so that His people might take hope from and shelter in His righteousness. So, too, His Prophets found comfort therein in the dark days of Israel's declension: "the just LORD is in the midst thereof, He will do no iniquity" (Zeph. 3:5). While from Revelation 15:3 we learn that the denizens of Heaven exclaim, "great and marvellous are Thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints."

"Justice and judgment are the habitation of Thy throne: mercy and truth shall go before Thy face" (Psa. 89:14). This is perhaps the most helpful passage of all in the casting of light upon the most-important, awe-inspiring, and yet glorious subject we are now seeking to study. The great Jehovah is here exhibited to our view under the idea of Sovereign and judge, being presented to our adoring regard as upon His *throne*. It is the Throne of universal empire and of absolute dominion. From that throne the Lord exercises His authority and executes His laws with omnipotent but impartial hand. Justice and judgment are magnified as being the "habitation" or "foundation" (as the Hebrew word is also rendered) of Jehovah's throne. There seems to be an allusion unto the bases or supports of an ancient monarch's throne, as we are told the throne of Solomon had "*stays* on either side of the sitting place" (2 Chron. 9:18).

Let us first consider, briefly, the *nature* of God's justice. In seeking to arrive at a true conception thereof we need to be very much on our guard against carnalizing the same, degrading the Divine majesty by drawing analogies from that which appertains to the *human* realm. In human affairs justice is simply the giving to everyone his due: but such a rule cannot possibly be applied to the Most High, for the simple reason that He owes His creatures nothing. It cannot be too strongly insisted upon in this day of fleshly arrogance and spiritual ignorance that there is a vast difference between God's government over His rational creatures and that of an earthly prince over his subjects, and that consequently our notion of justice with regard to the latter cannot be lawfully applied to the former. It is failure at this very point which has resulted in the most wild and irreverent postulates in connection with the justice of God, whereby He has been brought down to the level of His creatures.

A secular ruler is set up for the good of his subjects, this being the principal end of his constitution. The people are not formed for him, but he for them, therefore the administration of justice is a common and public *right*, whereby he is entrusted with the supreme rule for them. The bare statement of this obvious fact is at once sufficient to show the infinite distance which separates between the King of kings and His administration and any secular ruler and his government. God exists not for the well-being of His

creatures, but is independent and self-sufficient: for His pleasure they are and were created (Rev. 4:11). Consequently He owes them *nothing*, nor can they profit Him anything. Therefore it necessarily follows that He could not be said to *wrong* His creatures had it so pleased Him to ordain an economy in which no provision was made for the infliction of punishment upon offenders according to their demerits: that was something which must be determined solely by His own sovereign pleasure.

*Absolutely* considered, God's justice is the universal rectitude of His nature, for antecedent to all the acts of His will respecting the government of His creatures the glorious and incomprehensible God was essentially and intrinsically righteous in Himself. Divine justice may also be considered relatively, that is, with regard to its exercise in the superintendence and government of rational creatures. It is with the latter the Scriptures are chiefly concerned, that is, with how God acts under the economy which He has instituted. Yet here and there the Sacred Pages give us a glimpse of what God was in Himself prior to His work of creation and taking upon Himself the office of Ruler and Judge. Those glimpses enable us to gain some idea of what Deity is in Himself, considered apart from all His works and workings. Here, too, yea, here *particularly*, we need to be doubly on our guard lest we be guilty of "limiting the Holy One" by circumscribing His actions beyond that which Holy Writ warrants.

It is one thing to say that God cannot act contrary to His own perfections, it is quite another to affirm that God must needs exercise those perfections. We need to use the greatest possible caution in saying what God *cannot* do. God cannot give His glory to another (Isa. 42:8), for to do so would be to admit a rival. God cannot look with approbation upon evil (Hab. 1:12) for to do so would sully His holiness. God cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:6), for then He would be unfaithful. God cannot lie (Titus 1:2), for He is without variableness or shadow of turning. But to declare that His justice *obliges* God *to* inflict punishment on sinners and that He cannot pardon without an atonement, is to daringly assert that which Scripture nowhere teaches. That He "*will* by no means clear the guilty" (Exo. 34: 7) warrants no man in saying that He "*can* by no means clear the guilty."

It should be pointed out that a thing may be just in a *twofold* sense: negatively, as that which justice does not disapprove of; and positively, as that which justice does require. And it is a question of vast importance if we are to have right conceptions of the absolute independence of God—to consider whether His will to punish sinners antecedently to His purpose to introduce the economy in which such now obtains—was just in the former sense only or also in the latter. Whose rights had God violated had He willed otherwise than He did? Certainly not the creature's, for He owed them nothing. Nor His own, had He been pleased to forego them. God rules now according to the constitution which He has made, yet none can show—for Scripture contains not the slightest hint thereon—that this constitution was the necessary effect and was *obliged by* His justice.

God was pleased to place His creatures under law—law which was accompanied and enforced by sanctions, promising the reward of life to the obedient and denouncing the penalty of death upon the disobedient—and as the Administrator of that law He is morally obligated to execute its terms. But to insist that a regime wherein sin must be punished or that He was limited to the appointing of a Substitute unto Death if the guilty were to go free, strikes this writer as little (if any) short of blasphemy. Against this it has often been objected that the words of the Redeemer, "If it be possible let this cup pass from Me,"

prove that there was no other way in which His people could be saved except by His drinking that cup. We answer, the reason why it was impossible that the Saviour should be spared that awful cup was not because the hands of Omniscience were fettered, but because the veracity of God must fulfill His own declarations to that very end.

It would be just as unwarrantable and wrong for us to say that the great God could not create this world any other way than He has. Or that His nature obligated Him to make it just as He did, is to insist that no alternative was left Him than to place it under the system of government which He has instituted, wherein virtue is rewarded, sin is punished, His grace illustriously displayed, His holiness and justice magnified by means of the satisfaction rendered to Him by His incarnate Son. God's wisdom is no more limited than is His power, and to argue that any one of the Divine perfections—be it holiness or justice—placed a *restriction* upon the contrivances of God's wisdom is presumption of the worst kind. The Divine omniscience is as truly regulated by God's sovereign will as is His omnipotence. All we are justified in saying is that the economy which God has appointed is the one which He deemed best and most glorifying unto Himself.

Under the economy which God instituted He has determined the manner and the extent in which His perfections shall be exercised and displayed. For example, He has determined the several offices which each Person in the Godhead shall respectively hold, and this He did freely of His own sovereign pleasure. He has determined the number of creatures He shall bring into existence, the length of their earthly life, and what shall be their eternal destiny, and in this, too, He acted without any restraint. He determined to give us a written revelation from Himself, concerning which He alone decided how much or how little of His everlasting counsels should be revealed and in which He has made certain promises that He has pledged Himself to fulfill. Certainly He was under no obligation to make any promises at all, but having made them His veracity and His faithfulness require Him to make them good. Thus, the only limitations which the Almighty has placed upon Himself in His dealings with His creatures are those which His own imperial *will* saw meet to impose.

Now under the constitution or economy which it has pleased God to institute in the superintendence or government of His rational creatures, His justice is known among men by different names according to the different objects which it is immediately conversant. Does the Most High, for instance, enact laws for His creatures? then His moral rectitude appears in these laws as *equity*. They are not cruel, but “holy, just and good” (Rom. 7:12), framed for our well-being. How thankful we should be for such a law. Has God condescended to express Himself in promises? then His rectitude therein is seen as *fidelity*, for He is immutably faithful in making good every one of them. Has He denounced punishment upon all disobedience? then in the execution of His threats, God's rectitude appears in His absolute *veracity*. Does He administer those laws both with respect to reward and punishment, with strict impartiality, so that He is no respecter of persons? then His rectitude appears as glorious *righteousness*.

It will thus be seen that His absolute justice expresses what God is in Himself, the moral rectitude of His nature; whereas His relative justice considers Him as standing in relation to His creatures. The one pertains to Him in His private character, the other in His public. It is in His assumption and discharge of His office of Ruler and Judge the latter is exercised. As the Sovereign of the universe He maintains the rights of His

throne and order among His subjects. Because of the moral rectitude of His nature, when He enacts laws they are equitable, when He makes declarations they are true, when He expresses Himself in promises they are faithful, and when He declares threats against disobedience they are righteous and inexorable. As the “Habitation of justice” God is to be revered: as the King of kings He is to be submitted unto. He cannot be injured by us, nor does He suffer by our disobedience, but He will assuredly avenge it and vindicate His name.—A.W.P.

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September, 1940

### COVENANT MERCY.

Mercy is that perfection in Jehovah which disposes Him to save miserable sinners: not a blind mercy such as infidels dream of, but consistent with the honour of His law and exercised to the glory of its holy precepts and just sanctions; therefore mercy and truth are so often mentioned together in Scripture. God will not show any mercy to sinners but such as tends to establish His truth. Not one of His words can be broken, nor can one tittle of them ever fail. He will be justified in all His sayings and clear when He is judged. He will be true and just whenever He is merciful: His mercies being all covenant mercies, and all given in and through Christ Jesus. All men are by nature children of wrath, and only they who are chosen and called in Christ Jesus are saved from wrath. These are vessels of mercy. His mercy is to them the love of a tender Parent to His miserable children. He pities them and determines to save them from their sins: in due time He quickens them, gives them eyes to see and hearts to believe in Christ as the Apostle witnesses: "God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph. 2:4-5).

But for what reason and upon what account is He merciful to them? His mercy has no motive but His own will. The objects of His mercy are corrupt fallen creatures, deserving His wrath even as others; and therefore He does not deal with them upon the footing of desert. If He showed them mercy for any foreseen works of their own, because He knew they would repent and believe the Gospel, and walk worthy of it, mercy would then be turned into justice, and would lose both its name and nature. Whereas He says, "I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I will have

compassion.” It is from Mine own freedom and sovereignty that I have mercy on any sinners. The cause is in Myself and not in them. I have compassion on whom I will. It is from Mine own love that I have determined to be gracious to them; and My love has determined to save them, and the way also in which I will save them. I have appointed the end and the means at the same time. Of Mine own motion and goodwill I have resolved to give My Son for them and My Spirit to them, that they may repent and believe the Gospel and walk worthy of it. And so I may bring them through My tender mercies to eternal salvation. If this were not the case, how could the description be true that mercy is “from everlasting to everlasting”?

The mercy of God knows no variableness or shadow of turning. It is always the same. His Fatherly heart ever entertained thoughts of mercy towards them, for when He shows them mercy it is said to be “according to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus”—not for their merits but for His mercies' sake—not for what they may claim to be, but for His own name's sake. He gives all from mercy, and He would have all the glory returned to the mercy of the Giver. What He gives, that He continues, and according to Covenant engagements. Covenant mercies are *certain* mercies: “I will make an Everlasting Covenant with you, even the sure mercies of the Beloved” (Isa. 55:3). They have already been made sure to Him. He is now in full possession of every promised mercy. And He has received them not as a private person, but as the Head of the Body, the Church. He keeps them for the use of His Church members. And as sure as the crown is upon His head, so surely will it be upon every one of their heads; for they are in the same covenant with Him, whose sure mercies reach from eternity to eternity.

Oh what a view is here opened to the eye of faith! Mercy always purposing, and in due time bestowing its free blessings upon sinners—mercy without beginning, and without ending. The Holy Spirit often calls upon us to behold it in this life, for He has not celebrated any of the Divine properties so much as this. It is frequently the noble subject of thanksgiving in the Psalmist's hymns. He has dedicated the 136th entirely to the praise of *mercy*: and going through the works of nature, providence, and grace, He ascribes them, one by one, to that mercy which endures forever. Oh happy, thrice happy objects of it! What was in the heart of the Father of mercies towards you from everlasting will be so to everlasting. His sure mercies are yours. His compassions toward you fail not. Whatever you want for your successful walk, He has promised to give you. Be not discouraged then: He will supply all your wants, not for your sakes, but for His mercies' sake. Are you sensible of your unworthiness? That is well, mercy is for such. It can have no glory but from such as you. Trust it, and be assured you will find that it “endures forever.”

If a doubt should arise in your mind—it is true, mercy in God cannot fail, but the exercise of it towards *me* may fail: I may so walk as to deprive myself of all claim and title to it. The Psalmist has given a direct answer to this ill-grounded suspicion. He says, “The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting unto them that fear Him.” “Unto them that *fear* Him”: this is their character—they *fear* their God. Once there was no fear of God before their eyes; but now they know Him to be their Father. The Spirit of adoption has given them joy and peace in believing it. Hence a holy, filial fear rules in their hearts, and influences their walk. While it operates thus, and as obedient children, they fear to offend their loving Father, and desire to please Him in all things. What ground have they to suspect that His mercy toward them should fail?

But if they cease to fear Him, then will He cease to be merciful to them? No, blessed be God. He has made

ample provision in this case. “I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me” (Jer. 32:40). This fear is one of the fruits of the Spirit, which He produces in all the children of God; and they have it from Him as a covenant blessing, which is full security for its continuance. It is one of the graces provided for them in the Saviour by the Father's immutable love. “I will,” says He, “give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me forever” (Jer. 32:39). The Holy Spirit is the Guardian of this never-failing fear. It is His office to put it and then to keep it in their hearts. He has the whole charge of it; and therefore He has promised to abide with them forever, that they may fear the Lord all the days of their lives.—W. Romaine, 1770.

(We need scarcely point out that though God bestows inferior and temporal mercies on all His creatures, yet His best and eternal favours are restricted to His elect).

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September, 1940

### **SABBATH DESECRATION.**

“Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work; but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work” (Exo. 20:8-10). This is God's unchanging law, and no pressure of circumstances can possibly warrant our defiance of the same. All history testifies to the fact that the Lord God is very jealous of His Sabbath, and that He (sooner or later) manifests His sore displeasure upon those who desecrate it. He has recently done so upon Great Britain. No sooner did our munitions factories start on a seven day a week program than we lost practically the whole of our B.E.F. equipment in Flanders! No sooner did the Welsh coal miners start working on the Lord's Day, than France capitulated, and we lost our best coal customer! “Be not deceived: God is not mocked.” And now it is announced, “For the first time on a Sunday the Zoo in Regent's Park is to be open at 1 o'clock to the general public.” Of old God asked, “What evil thing is this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath Day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath” (Neh. 13:17, 18). If our present wicked Sabbath desecration continues, we shall certainly bring “more wrath” from God upon Great Britain.  
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by Arthur W. Pink

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### THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

“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). Gladly would we tarry and seek to extract from this remarkable verse something of its inexpressible sweetness, that we may be more firmly established in the Faith and that our souls may be nourished thereby. But as God's people of old were required to eat the paschal lamb with “bitter herbs,” so we are called upon to take to heart the fearful price which had to be paid for our salvation. “The redemption of their souls is precious” or “costly” (Psa. 49:8): so infinitely costly that the Holy One was “made sin” for us. This was a Divine transaction, a profoundly mysterious one, yet one which is presented for faith to receive. It lies at the very core of the Gospel, and our peace depends very largely upon a right understanding thereof.

It is only by diligently comparing passage with passage and allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture that we shall be preserved from serious error at this vital point. First, then, we turn to the great type of this unique transaction. On the annual day of atonement, we are told that, “Aaron shall lay both his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over him all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, and shall send him away by the hand of a fit man into the wilderness: and the goat *shall bear upon him* all their iniquities into a land not inhabited” (Lev. 16:21, 22). Thus there was in figure an actual transference of all the iniquities of God's people unto the head of the victim. In like manner, we are informed, “the LORD hath laid on Him the iniquities of us all” (Isa. 53:6), and therefore does the Apostle declare of Christ, “Who His own self bear

our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24).

To say that Christ's being “made sin for us” means that God appointed Him to be a *sin-offering* in our stead, does not go back far enough: nothing could be offered as an expiatory sacrifice unless and until sin had been imputed to it—note the laying of the offerer's hands upon the head of the animal *before* slaying it in Leviticus 1:4, 5 and 4:4. Christ not only endured the full penalty which our sins deserved, but the very guilt and breach of the Law was charged to Him. How definitely our sins *were* made (legally constituted) His, appears from His actually confessing them as His own: “For innumerable evils have compassed Me about: *Mine iniquities* have taken hold upon Me” (Psa. 40:12). He owned—see verses 7 and 8 for the identification of the Speaker. So again He declared, “O God, Thou knowest My foolishness, and My sins are not hid from Thee” (Psa. 69:5)

To say that Christ's being “made sin” signifies that He was *paid its wages* or caused to suffer the penalty of His people's transgressions is also an inadequate and faulty definition, for it confounds an effect with its cause. Christ could not have been punished for sin unless He had stood guilty in the sight of the Law: punishment always supposes guilt, personal or imputed. Christ was culpable in the eyes of the Law because He took the place of and acted as the Sponsor for His sinful people; the awful load of the accumulated guilt of all their iniquities being laid upon Him. The Lord Jesus was “made sin *for us*”: that is, in our place, for the idea of substitution is necessarily involved in the very nature of this transaction. The spotless Victim occupied the room of the foul violators of the Law, and therefore He must die. Because He was “made sin” He was also “made a curse *for us*” (Gal. 3:13): the latter being the consequence of the former.

But though legally identified with us, the Sponsor and Surety must not be personally confounded with ourselves. Whether we regard Christ personally as Immanuel or officially as Substitute, He always occupied a place which pertained to Him alone. The fact of His bearing His people's sins never brought Him down morally to their personal condition. When the fearful guilt of our transgressions lay upon Him, His own personal place of holy separateness (Heb. 7:6) was still retained by Him, and recognized by God as retained by Him. Heaven was opened at the Cross, and if on the one hand wrath burning as fire descended on the sacred Person of our Substitute, on the other hand it must be remembered that from the Cross there returned to Heaven, ascending like a cloud, acceptable fragrance which filled the Sanctuary. Beautifully was this brought out in the types: even the fat of the *sin* offering was burned upon the altar for “a sweet savour unto the LORD” (Lev. 4:31), while “sweet incense” was employed on the day of atonement (Lev. 16:12, 13).

The utmost care must be used by us when meditating upon this solemn and sacred mystery. Though it pleased God to make the Sinless One to be sin for us, yet so far from the glory of Christ being tarnished thereby, it was enhanced. Though bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, nevertheless it was the Holy One who bore them: His personal purity unsullied, His immaculate nature uncontaminated. This is made manifest in another, one of the most beautiful of all the types, namely, *the veil*. The veil, which in the tabernacle separated the holy place from the holiest of all, was the appointed emblem of our Saviour's humanity—of “His flesh” (Heb. 10:20). It was prominently associated with His death, for it was then rent by God “from the top to the bottom” (Matt. 27:51). How blessed, then, to see that the very basis of that

veil was *pure white linen*, and that on that basis was displayed (by Christ in life and death alike) the heavenly “blue” as well as the purple and scarlet (Exo. 26:31).

It remains for us now to add a brief word upon *the merits* of Christ. Not only was the Lord Jesus, negatively, exempt from the taint of original sin and free from all personal transgression, but He was perfectly conformed to the whole will of God both in heart and life, rendering complete and perpetual obedience to His Law in thought, word, and deed. And that God-glorifying obedience of His was entitled to reward. Now that perfect obedience which Christ rendered unto the Law was a vicarious one, being performed in the place and on behalf of His people: consequently, as death became the portion of the Substitute, eternal life becomes the certain portion of all whom He represented. Christ was made sin for us that we might be made “the righteousness of God in Him.”—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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October, 1940

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

We now come to consider, second, its *rule*. Righteousness in creatures is according to some law, which is the rule of it and to which it is conformed: the moral law of God, which is holy, just, and good, is our rule of righteousness or right doing. But the Most High has no law outside Himself: He is a law to Himself. His nature and His will are the law and rule of righteousness to Him. This is an attribute common to the three Persons in the Godhead: necessarily so, since They partake of the same undivided essence. Hence we find the first Person is designated the “righteous Father” (John 17:25), the Son is called “Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1), and that it is proper to the Holy Spirit is evident from the fact that He is here to convict the world “of righteousness” (John 16:8). As the present aspect of our subject is of such great importance we must endeavour to give it our best attention.

“The will of God is the highest rule of justice, so that what He wills must be considered just: for this very reason, because He willed it. When it is enquired, therefore, why the Lord did so? the answer must be, Because He would. But if you further ask why He so determined, you are in search of something greater and higher than the will of God, which can never be found” (Calvin's Institutes, book 3, chapter 3, section 2). How great was the light granted to the eminent Reformer and how clearly and boldly he expressed himself thereon. What a contrast from the obscurity which now obtains in this so-called age of enlightenment, with its ambiguous, hesitant and apologetic declarations. That Calvin was by no means alone in this exalted view will appear from other quotations given below.

In answer to the question, “Why was it that Adam was permitted to fall and corrupt his whole posterity when God could have prevented his fall?” Luther said, “God is a Being whose will acknowledges no cause: neither is it for us to prescribe rules to His sovereign pleasure, or call Him to account for what He does. He has neither superior nor equal, and His will is the rule of all things. He did not therefore will such and such things because they were right and He was bound to will them, but they are therefore equitable and right *because* He wills them. The will of men can indeed be influenced and moved but God's will never can. To assert the contrary is to undeify Him” (Bondage of Man's Will). To the same effect Bucer said, “God has no other motive to what He does than His own mere will, which will is so far from being unrighteous, it is justice itself.”

God is absolute Lord, so that “He doeth according to *His will* in the army of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, What doest Thou?” (Dan. 4:35). And why not? Because He not only has the might but also the fullest right to do as He pleases. None was before Him, none is above Him: nay, He has no equal to direct Him, and therefore there is none unto whom He must render an account of His matters. What God ordains for us and what He orders from us is just and right simply because He so wills it. Hence it was that Abraham looked upon it as a righteous act to slay his innocent son. But why did he so esteem it—because the written law of God authorized murder? No. On the contrary, both the law of God and the law of nature peremptorily forbade it; but the holy Patriarch well knew that the will of God is the only rule of justice and that whatever He is pleased to command is on that very account righteous.

“What is the justice of God? It is an essential property in God, whereby He is infinitely just in Himself, of Himself, for, from, and by Himself alone, and no other. What is the rule of this justice? His own free will and nothing else for whatsoever He wills is just, and because He wills it, it is just, and not because it is just therefore He wills it” (James Usher, Body of Divinity). In answering the objection that “it is unjust for God to inflict eternal punishment upon temporary offenses, there being no proportion between the infinite and the finite, the Puritan, Thomas Brooks, wisely began his reply by saying: “First, God's will is the rule of righteousness and therefore whatever He doeth or shall do must needs be righteous. He is Lord of all: He has a sovereign right, and an absolute supremacy over the creature” (Vol. 6, p. 213).

We have added one quotation after another from these renowned servants of God of the past because the truth which we are now labouring has been repudiated in quarters in which it was not to be expected. Even in circles which might justly be termed orthodox—where in the main the onslaughts of infidelity were steadfastly resisted and the “landmarks” of the fathers steadily maintained—the sharp edge of the Spirit's Sword was dulled and those aspects of Truth most of all repellant to human pride toned down. In their well-meant efforts to refute the errors of Socinians a few even of the Puritans suffered their zeal to override knowledge, so that in their determination to concede nothing unto their opponents, they sacrificed some important elements of the Truth; and only too often later generations have followed *their* lead rather than those who were uncompromising.

In the above paragraph we alluded to those who have, under the guise of magnifying God's holiness, subordinated the Divine will to the Divine nature, insisting that “things are not just because God has commanded them, but He has commanded them because they are just.” Our meaning is that there was a

reason for them in the nature of things, and that therefore He has enforced them by His authority. In plain language they mean that the Most High was not free to frame whatever laws He pleased, but was limited by the fitness of things, that His imperial will must conform to some standard *ab extra* to itself. Before we examine this position more closely, and turn upon it the light of Holy Writ, we will give yet one or two further quotations from eminent servants of God in the past for the purpose of showing how radically it differs from what they taught.

Thomas Manton, who was personal chaplain to Sir Oliver Cromwell, took the position that in contemplating the Divine justice, “God must be considered under a twofold relation: as absolute Lord, and as Governor and Judge of the world. As absolute Lord, His justice is nothing but the absolute and free motion of His own will concerning the estate of His creatures. In this respect God is wholly arbitrary and has no other rule but His own will: He does not will things because they are just, but therefore they are just because He wills them. He has a right of making and framing anything as He wills in any manner as it pleases Him . . . As Governor and Judge, He gives a law to His creatures, and His governing justice consists in giving all their due according to His law” (Vol. 8, pp. 438, 439).

“The will of God is so the cause of all things as to be itself without cause, for nothing can be the cause of that which is the cause of everything: so that the Divine will is the *ne plus ultra* of all our inquiries: when we ascend to that, we can go no further. Hence we find every matter resolved ultimately into the mere sovereign pleasure of God as the spring and occasion of whatever is done in Heaven and earth . . . The only reason that can be assigned why the Deity does this or that is because it is His own free pleasure so to do” (from the pen of the author of “Rock of Ages” and other well-known hymns, in his “Observations on the Divine Attributes”: 1750). Such teaching as this alone preserves the Divine independence and presents the true God in His unrivalled freedom and supremacy, unhampered by anything within or without Himself.

But against this God-exalting teaching it is objected that such postulates obliterate all distinction between God's sovereignty and His justice, merging the latter entirely into the former. With equal justification might we complain that the objector fails to maintain any distinction between the Divine holiness and the Divine justice, making the former to completely swallow up the latter. Should it be asked, Wherein shall we distinguish between the Divine holiness and justice? We answer, the one has to do more with what God is, the other respects what He does. Or to state it in other words, holiness pertains to the Divine character, justice to His office. Thus, “Justice and judgment are the habitation (and “foundation”) of His throne” (Psa. 89:14), that is, they relate to His public administration, to the government of His creatures. It is as Ruler and Judge that the Divine justice is exercised and displayed.

As to the objection that we obliterate all distinctions between the Divine sovereignty and justice, our reply is that we cannot do otherwise if our thoughts are to be formed entirely by the Scriptures. “Being predestinated according to the purpose of Him who worketh all things after the counsel of His own *will*” (Eph. 1:11). There is no getting around that explicit statement, and to it we must rigidly subordinate our minds and formulate our theology if we are to “think God's thoughts after Him.” Observe well it is not here said that God works all things according to the exigencies of His holiness, or according to the dictates of His wisdom, but “according to the counsel of His own *will*.” True, blessedly true, that every volition of

His is both a holy and a wise one, yet God alone decided what is holy and what is wise. He is under no law and tied by no rules, but ever acts according to His own good pleasure and that alone—and very frequently He does that which is flatly contrary to *our* ideas both of wisdom and justice.

It is this very fact which infidels and agnostics have sought to make captive out of. In the face of what confronts them both in creation and in providence they have drawn the conclusion that either the Almighty is a capricious or cruel Tyrant, or that having brought the world into existence He has withdrawn and left it to work out its own destiny. They ask, Why are there such glaring inequalities in nature: one child being born normal and another cripple, one enjoying health, and the other being a sufferer all its days? Why are some born under a government which gives them freedom while others are doomed to abject slavery? Why have some men more enlarged understanding than others, and some stronger passions than their neighbours? Why is it that virtue so often passes unrewarded and the wicked flourish and prosper? If it be replied, All of this is the consequence of *sin*, then the infidel asks, Why is there untold suffering among innocent animals?

And what is the answer to these expressions of unbelief, these outbursts of rebellion? How shall we silence those who wickedly affirm that the works and ways of the Most High are stamped with injustice? Or, what is far more to the point, how are young Christians to be dealt with who are disturbed by such troublers of their peace? The blatant enemies of the Lord we can well afford to treat with silent contempt, for the great Jehovah needs no efforts of ours to vindicate His character—in due time He will Himself close their mouths. But as to removing such stumblingstones from the path of our fellow pilgrims, there is but one satisfactory and sufficient way, and that is by maintaining the sovereign rights of Him with whom we have to do—by insisting that He is the Potter and we but clay in His hands to be molded just as He pleases.

Why has God given light to the sun, grass to the fields, heat to fire, and cold to ice? Why, in short, has He done any of those things which we see He has done when He could easily have done otherwise? There is only one adequate answer: in the varied manifestations of His attributes and in the communication of good or evil to His creatures, God has acted according to the sovereignty of *His own will*. Nor is it to the slightest degree unbecoming that God *should* act thus. Sovereignty is the most godlike of all the perfections of the Divine character, for it is that on which the awful supremacy of the great Jehovah chiefly rests. Our concept of “the high and lofty One who inhabiteth eternity” would not be raised but lowered if we discovered that He was *hampered* in His actions. The display of His own glory as the King of kings and Lord of lords must take precedence over everything else.

“The Lord is upright . . . there is no unrighteousness in Him” (Psa. 92:15). Yet this is patent not to carnal sight, but to the vision of faith alone. The eyes of the naturally blind cannot discern the light of the sun, nevertheless it is full of light. In like manner, the eyes of the spiritually blind are incapable of perceiving the equity of God's ways, yet they are all righteous. But we repeat, they are righteous not because they are conformed to some external standard of excellence, nor even because they are in harmony with one of the Divine attributes, but solely because they are the ways of Him who “worketh all things after the counsel of His own *will*.” God's commanding Abimelech to deliver Sarah to Abraham, or else He would destroy both him *and his household*” (Gen. 20:7), may seem unjust in man's estimation, but has not the great God the right to do as He pleases?

Take the most extreme example of all: God's choosing one unto eternal life and another unto eternal death. Yet none who, by grace, bow to the authority of Holy Writ find any stumblingblock therein. Though they do not profess to understand the reason for God so acting, yet they unhesitatingly acknowledge His *right* so to do. Distrusting *their* conceptions of justice and injustice, they submit to the high sovereignty of Him who is Lord over all. And it is this very submission which brings to their hearts a peace which passes all understanding. Amid the profound mysteries of life, the perplexities of their own lot, though God's judgments are a "great deep" and His ways often "past finding out," they have the unshakable assurance that the Judge of all the earth has done, is doing, and shall do, "*right*."

And why is it that the believer is so confident that simply because *God* does a thing it is necessarily right and good? Because he has learned this very lesson from the lips of Christ, "I thank Thee, O Father, Lord of Heaven and earth, because Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent and hast revealed them unto babes. Even so, Father; for so it seemed good in Thy sight" (Matt. 11:25, 26). Observe the character in which the Father is here viewed: "Lord of Heaven and earth," that is, as Sovereign supreme with indisputable right. Note the basis of action which the Redeemer attributes unto Him: "for so it seemed good in Thy sight": no other explanation is vouchsafed, none other is needed, *that* is all-sufficient. Finally, mark well His "even so": however strange it may seem to us, *that* closes the door to all impious inquiry and speculation. We are not to be the judges of God's actions, but the doers of His will. His own "good pleasure" is His only rule.

Moreover, let it not be forgotten that Christ conducted Himself in perfect consonance with His public declarations. In Gethsemane we find that He resolved His sufferings into the sovereign pleasure of the Father. How striking and how blessed to hear Him say, "Thy *will* be done." This is the more remarkable and most pertinent to the point before us when we note that He immediately prefaced His acquiescence by affirming, "Abba Father, *all things are* possible unto Thee: take away this cup from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what Thou wilt" (Mark 14:36). How plainly do such words expose the error of those who contend there was an absolute necessity why God *must* punish sin, and why if His people were to be pardoned a Substitute *must* suffer in their stead. Christ knew God had willed that He should drink this awful cup, and He meekly submitted thereto, but He made it crystal clear that God had willed this not because His nature demanded the same, but simply because this was the way His own good pleasure had selected.

Those words, "All things are possible unto Thee," in such a connection prove beyond all shadow of doubt that the Father acted *freely*, and without any compulsion from His holiness or justice in appointing Christ to make satisfaction for the sins of His people. Scripture nowhere says that He *can* by no means clear the guilty, but rather that He "*will* by no means clear the guilty" (Exo. 34:7). In like manner the Apostle Paul was moved to write, "What if God *willing* to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22). It was not that any necessity of His nature demanded He should do so, but because it was the pleasure of His own imperial will so to do.

As it has been pointed out above, we must distinguish sharply between the absolute freedom possessed by God as Lord over all, and that which His perfections require from Him under the economy He was pleased to institute. His fidelity requires Him to make good His Promises and His veracity to fulfill His

threatenings, but He was under no constraint whatever to make *any* promises or threatenings. His justice requires Him to impartially administer the law He has given, but He was under no absolute necessity of framing any law at all. Sin is a disease: could He not have sovereignly healed it had He so pleased? Sins are “debts”: was He unable to cancel them had He so desired? Perish such a thought! It is argued that God is “a consuming fire” and that fire cannot *but* burn when it comes into contact with that which is combustible. Have such foolish objectors forgotten that fire burns *only* as God *orders* it so to do? It consumed not the bush, nor the three Hebrews in Babylon's furnace! God “worketh *all* things after the counsel of His own WILL” (Eph. 1:11).—A.W.P.

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October, 1940

### **XMAS.**

“Who hath required *this* at your hand?” (Isa. 1:12). This question was asked Israel of old by Jehovah with regard to their “vain oblations,” which He declared were an “abomination” unto Him. Well may He issue the same searching inquiry to the peoples of Christendom in connection with their annual carnal gratifications and financial extravagances in the celebrating of “Xmas.” Most certainly the Lord Himself does not require it. Nowhere in His Word has He bidden us to celebrate the birth of His Son, and nowhere in the New Testament is there any record that the early Christians did so. Therefore, if even a *religious* commemoration of the incarnation of the Saviour receives not the slightest warrant from the Scriptures, then how much less does the worldly and fleshly celebrating thereof find justification therein?

If, then, *God* has not required anyone to memorialize the birth of Christ, who has? Who are the ones that have introduced and popularized this innovation? The first answer is, *the Papacy*. This is unmistakably evident from the name given to this season, for “Xmas” is but an abbreviation of “Christ-mass.” It is Rome and those sections of Protestantism which never succeeded in completely shaking off her shackles who have engineered this monstrosity. Second, it is *the Mammonites* who saw their opportunity to make capital out of the same. They have commercialized this season for their own mercenary gain, for probably more money changes hand during December than in any three months together. Third, the *lovers of pleasure* have united with the lovers of money to make this season one of festivity and feasting, in which they can gratify their carnal lusts to the full.

There are few things in the world today which so plainly evidence how rapidly and how thoroughly so-called “Protestantism” is being Romanized as the observance of “Xmas” by both church-goers and the masses who make no religious profession. The Papists have been quick to seize such an opportunity for the promotion of Mariolatry. And sad it is to see the watchmen on Zion's walls asleep at their posts of duty, instead of sounding the alarm. With very few exceptions so-called Protestant churches and chapels yield to the popular demand and have their “special Christmas services.” How the pope and his satellites must chuckle at the folly of those whose fathers once stood as a firm bulwark against her insidious approaches. Reader, you are playing into the hands of Rome if you observe “Xmas.”

There are few things today which more clearly and tragically demonstrate that the line of demarcation between the Church and the world has been blotted out than the way in which those claiming to be saints join arm in arm with the godless at this festive season. What an anomaly! Why the very term “saint” signifies a *separated* one—a one who has severed himself from those who despise and reject his Lord and Saviour. What an anomaly we say, to behold the alleged friends of Christ making common cause with His enemies in an orgy of money-spending, carnal gluttony, and merry making. How empty their claim to belong unto God's “peculiar people” (Titus 2:14); how worthless their profession that they are “strangers and pilgrims” here (1 Peter 2:11)! Reader, you are acting the part of an utter worldling if you observe “Xmas.”

“I earnestly desire to see the wall of separation between the Church and the world made broader and stronger. Nothing gives me more sorrow than when I hear of church members saying, 'Well, there is no harm in this, there is no harm in that,' and getting as near to the world as possible. We are to avoid the very appearance of evil, and especially just at this festive season of the year, this Christmas, when so many of you are having your parties, your children's sports, and all that kind of thing. I would have you doubly jealous; do recollect, church members, that you are to be Christians always, if Christians at all; we do not grant dispensations to sin, as the Roman Catholics did in Luther's day, you are *always* to wear your regimentals as Christian soldiers, and never, at any time, to say, 'I shall do this just now: it is only once a year; I shall do as the world does; I cannot be out of the fashion.' You must be either out of the fashion or out of the true Church. Recollect that, because the place for Christ's Church is altogether out of the fashion. You are called to go forth without the camp, bearing His reproach. If you want to be in the camp, you cannot be Christ's disciple. You must be a separated one or be lost.” (C. H. Spurgeon).

Those words are found in a sermon preached by that fearless man of God in “Xmas” week of 1867. How much stronger would be his language were he on earth today, witnessing the vast majority of church-members joining with the irreligious in this mad saturnalia, for mad it certainly is, even taking it on its lowest grounds. Think of the money which is wasted in the exchange of “Xmas presents”! How tragic to witness, as we did all through last December, little tots, poorly clad, sent out night after night on to the streets, exposed to the bitter cold and snow, singing “Xmas Carols” and calling from house to house for pennies to hand over to their beer-drinking parents: police ignoring such a breach of the law (as they now do the breaking of others) and professing Christians encouraging them by handing them money.

“If any man would come after Me,” said the Redeemer, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (Matt. 16:24). Saving grace is not merely a theological term but a Divine dynamic, “teaching

us that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12). But what *denying of self* is there by those who observe “Xmas”? What indeed—it is the very opposite—ungodly and worldly lusts are freely indulged, and instead of heeding that Divine precept, “make not provision for the flesh” (Rom. 13:14) it is blatantly trampled underfoot by “the Church” and the world alike. This in itself should be sufficient to open the eyes of real Christians to this glaring evil if they have never been previously warned thereon.

“A merry Christmas.” What a travesty! What a mockery! Was the Christ of God accorded a “merry Christmas” when He entered this world? Was He given an open-hearted welcome? Far, very far from it, as the manger cradle manifested. The fact is that His presence was not wanted. “No room” in the inn was indicative, symptomatic, prophetic of the days of His public ministry, when oftentimes He “had not where to lay His head.” Behold the Lord of glory, my reader, first opening His incarnate eyes in a stable and then ask yourself is *that* a fit object and subject for merry making? We are well aware that this brief article is likely to be distasteful to some of our readers (because it *condemns* them); but suppose it is a message which *God* has prompted! In such case it will rise up in judgment against you in the Day to come if you disregard its warning and continue to further Rome's activities and join hands with the world in its Christ-insulting merriment.—A.W.P.

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November, 1940

### THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.

“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). It remains for us now to notice the three things here said about God's people: these are their guilt, their deliverance, their righteousness. First, our *criminality*. It was because we lay under the curse of the Law that the Holy One of God was made sin for us. Therein we may perceive the awful demerits of our case: such a drastic and costly remedy makes unmistakably evident the desperateness of our condition by nature. We best learn God's estimate of sin by the wages He pays it: nowhere is its exceeding sinfulness so apparent as at the Cross. Faulty views of the Atonement necessarily result in low estimates of sin. Contrariwise, nothing is so calculated to humble us because of our vileness as faith's contemplation of Christ being made a curse for us.

Second, our *deliverance*. This was something which lay wholly beyond our own powers. Impossible that we could undo the past, equally impossible that we could offer unto God any satisfaction for our countless transgressions. We could no more change our fallen natures than the Ethiopian can change the colour of his skin. To create a world would be no less impracticable than for a depraved creature to produce the fruits of holiness. So far as we were concerned, our case was utterly hopeless: unless Divine mercy took pity upon us, we must inevitably perish. That mercy took the form not of an arbitrary command nor simply of invincible power, but by ordering that none other than the Son of God should become man, take our place, assume our responsibilities and discharge our debts. It was by the sufferings of Christ we were eternally freed from condemnation.

Third, our *righteousness*. Here is the blessedness and glory of the Gospel of God's grace: that we who are totally devoid of righteousness, who are positively unrighteous, guilty, yea, whose best performances are “filthy rags” in the sight of Heaven, become the very “righteousness of God in Him.” Note well those words “in Him,” and not in ourselves, for the reference is not to sanctification, but to our *justification*; not to our state, but to our *standing* before the Divine Throne. “Righteousness” is here to be taken in its forensic sense, and not as referring to any moral change; to the ground of our acceptance, and not to any disposition of mind or heart wrought in us by the Spirit. The abstract is used for the purpose of emphasis: it is not merely that we are accepted as righteous, but the very ground on which that rests is stated—we become “righteousness” itself.

It is of vital importance that we should have a clear Scriptural conception of this fundamental truth. The believer becomes righteousness solely by *imputation*, just as Christ was “made sin” solely by imputation. True, there are inseparable consequences in each instance: for just as Christ's being made sin led to His being dealt with accordingly, so our becoming righteousness judicially entails the sanctifying work of the Spirit in us experimentally. But our text is not treating of the effects in either case, but goes right back to bed-rock causes. In precisely the same way that Christ was made sin for us—namely, by God's imputing to Him the entire guilt of our iniquities; so we become the righteousness of God in Him—namely, by God's imputing to us the whole merits of Christ's Law-magnifying obedience.

The antithesis is exact and minute: as our guilt was charged to Christ, so His righteousness is reckoned to our account. As the transference of our guilt to the Surety entailed His suffering the penalty thereof, so the imputation of Christ's obedience unto us entitles us to its reward. As it was for no criminal acts of His own that Christ was made sin—so it is not by any pious conduct of ours that we become righteousness before the Divine tribunal. As it was not on account of any infection of nature or any personal acts of sin that Christ was treated by Divine justice as an offender, so it is not in view of any holiness wrought in us that we are accepted of God and pronounced just by His Law. It is “by the obedience of One,” and not by the works of each believer, that the many are “made (legally constituted) righteous” (Rom. 5:19).

Let us call attention to a parallel passage: “but He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and with His stripes we are healed” (Isa. 53:5). Thus once more we see how helpfully Scripture explains Scripture, for by carefully weighing the terms of this prophecy we are supplied with a sure interpretation of our text. First, the fact of our Saviour's vicarious suffering is stated, those sufferings being inflicted upon Him for our iniquities. Second, the explanation of this solemn transaction is given: punishment was visited upon the Redeemer because the guilt of His people's sins had been laid upon Him. Third, the blessed outcome of this is declared: His being wounded ensures our healing. The “stripes” were all due to us, and they were due to us because of our transgressions; but because our iniquities were imputed to Christ, the stripes were laid upon Him, and therefore healing comes to be ours.

The grand truth affirmed in our text is *the exchange of places*. It is the twofold exchange of places in respect of sin and righteousness severally, and the counter imputations thereof. This is set forth by an antithesis, which fully drawn out would read: “He hath made Him that knew no sin to be sin for us: that

we (who knew no righteousness) might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” But there is one word where the parallel is departed from, though this is hidden in our English translation. God “made (constituted) Christ to be sin for us,” but it is not said in the balancing clause, “that we might be made the righteousness of God”: an entirely different Greek word is used, and would be better rendered, “that we might *become* the righteousness of God in Him.” And why? Because this righteousness is only “upon all them that *believe*” (Rom. 3:22). The price was paid when Christ died; our actual possession thereof is when we are planted into Him by faith.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

November, 1940

### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

We come now to consider, third, its *manifestation*. But let us make it unmistakably clear at the outset that it is the manifestation of God's justice under the economy which He has instituted which we shall here treat of. It cannot be insisted upon too strongly that there is a vast difference between the justice of God when it be viewed absolutely and when it be viewed relatively—a difference as real and as great as that which exists between His essential independence and those restrictions which He has voluntarily assumed. The justice of God considered absolutely consists of His own Divine rights to do whatever He pleases; the justice of God considered relatively consists of His course of action in relation to those creatures which He has placed under a moral constitution, wherein He has pledged Himself unto a certain order of procedure.

This distinction is far more than a metaphysical nicety: it is a basic fact. The great God was absolutely free to create or not create, just as He saw fit. There was no compulsion—either from within or without—for Him to bring creatures into existence: He decided to go forth into acts of creation solely for His own glory. In like manner, God was entirely free to create whatever kind of creatures He pleased: it was solely for Him to determine whether they should be rational entities or not. So, too, it was for Him to decide whether or not evil should enter His universe and sin mar the works of His hands. Furthermore, it was entirely at His option whether He should promptly annihilate evil-doers or whether their existence should be prolonged; and if prolonged, whether their iniquities should be pardoned or punished; and if punished in what way and for how long. Alas, how ignorant this generation is of Holy Writ!

Absolutely considered, then, the justice of God is one with His sovereignty: that is to say, whatever God decrees and whatever He does is just, simply and solely because it issues from His own imperial will. But relatively considered the justice of God consists in His administering with strict impartiality the Law which He was pleased to frame, so that He gives to each under it his exact due. Above, we made mention of those “restrictions” which God has voluntarily taken upon Himself: lest this be misunderstood or wrested, we hasten to define our meaning. It has pleased God to form a purpose or plan, the broad outlines of which are revealed in His Word, and He is now acting accordingly. It has pleased God to make certain promises and threats and He has pledged Himself to fulfill the same. We shall, then, now contemplate the Divine justice as it is manifested under that economy which the Lord God has appointed.

First, it is testified to by our conscience. Since it pleased the Creator to constitute man a rational creature and to place him under external law, He also saw fit to afford proof within himself that he is subject to a Government which is righteous and just. Man is not only endowed with a faculty which enables him to distinguish between right and wrong, but with perceptions that intuitively feel that justice is worthy of approbation and injustice of condemnation. This is a part of that “work of the law written within their hearts” (Rom. 2:15) by the Maker of men. It is in consequence of this moral faculty that the wicked “knowing (within themselves) the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32). Hence it is that from earliest times and all through the centuries the most benighted even of the heathen have resorted unto all manner of means and devices in seeking to placate Deity.

It is the province of our *conscience* to weigh actions in the scales of God's Law (or what we apprehend to be His Law) and pass sentence according to their conformity or lack of conformity with that standard. It has rightly been termed the deputy or vicegerent of God within our souls, for it performs not only the work of a monitor by reminding us of our duty and exciting us to attend unto the same, but also of a subordinate judge summoning us before its tribunal and pronouncing us innocent or guilty. Its sentences proceed on the assumption that God's Law is “holy, just and good,” with the demands of which we are bound to comply. And as Romans 2 tells us, this moral faculty obtains as truly in those who receive not the written Law of God as in those who do. Thus we see how the creature bears within him a witness to the attributes of God's justice, for the constitution of his mind is as much His work as is the balancing of the clouds.

The workings of conscience are indeed remarkable, for they often expose the vanity of our most specious pretenses and convict us of sin at the moment when we are employing all our sophistry in seeking to justify our mad conduct. In this manner the rights of God as the Supreme Governor to place man under law and to enforce its sanctions are manifested within him even amid his very attempts to repudiate His demands and escape from His yoke. This advocate for God's claims accompanies us wherever we go and makes its voice heard in solitude and company alike. It upbraids those whom men would never think of reproving, and speaks with such potency as makes kings to tremble upon their thrones. It checks us when we are meditating wicked devices and if unheeded, disturbs our pleasure while we are seeking to enjoy our unlawful spoils.

Second, the dispensations of *Providence* tend to confirm the dictates of conscience and manifest the justice of Him who is Lord over all. Providence supposes the preservation of creatures and the government of them according to their respective natures. Are there, then, any indications of a moral government over

men? Both experience and observation inform us that good and evil are disbursed, and the point we now raise is, do these appear to be allotted unto men in any degree according to their conduct considered as morally good or evil? Admittedly this is no question which is easy to answer to the satisfaction of many people, especially when they are in a gloomy mood—nevertheless, the Scriptures record so many examples of the justice of God in punishing sin and in rewarding righteousness that the godly cannot doubt the reality of this principle.

Among the more conspicuous demonstrations of the retributive justice of God we mention the sparing not of the angels that sinned, for God “cast them down to Hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment” (2 Peter 2:4); the swallowing of the inhabitants of the old world by the flood; the overthrow of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; the destruction of the haughty Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea; and the calamities which befell the rebellious Jews, particularly their transportation to Babylon and their subsequent dispersion by the Romans. Secular history also records many striking and solemn demonstrations of God taking vengeance on those who oppressed His people. Instances of Divine intervention in the lives of nations may still be observed, and will not be overlooked by those who are attentive unto what is passing around them and who piously believe that not a sparrow can fall to the ground without the permission of the Most High.

The like retributive justice of God appears also in the case of *individuals*. When the Israelites caught the Canaanite Adonibezek and cut off his thumbs and his big toes, he acknowledged, “Three score and ten kings, having their thumbs and their great toes cut off, gathered their meat under my table: as I have done, so God hath requited me” (Judg. 1:7). Ahab's blood was lapped up by dogs in the very place where the blood of Naboth had been shed (1 Kings 22:37, 38). Jezebel was more guilty than he: Ahab permitted, but Jezebel contrived. Ahab afterward humbled himself, and therefore received honourable burial; but Jezebel was entombed in the bellies of the dogs. Haman was executed on the very gallows which he had set up for Mordecai (Esth. 7:10). Henry the Third of France was killed in the same chamber where the horrible massacre had been planned, and Charles the Ninth died flowing in his own blood in bed.

So plainly does Providence hint that the Ruler of this world is endowed with justice that we find heathen antiquity uniting in acknowledging its belief in Divine retribution upon all enormities. Examples of this are found in the mariners who manned the ship in which Jonah was passenger, for they were convinced that the awful storm came upon them because of some evil-doer in their midst (Jonah 1:7); as also in the case of the inhabitants of Melita, for when they saw the viper settle upon the hand of Paul they exclaimed, “No doubt this man is a murderer whom, though he hath escaped the sea, yet vengeance suffereth not to live” (Acts 28:4). Indeed it will generally be found that the heathen are far readier to consider the workings of Divine retribution than are those nations which profess to be Christian, and that unbelievers today are more ready to own God's hand in justice than most of those who claim to be believers.

This principle of Divine retribution appears also in the lives of God's own people. Jacob secured Isaac's blessing by a piece of deception, posing as his brother Esau, and after seven years of hard service with Laban the homely Leah was palmed off on him in the stead of her beautiful sister Rachel. When Joseph was inflexible to his brethren's requests they exclaimed, “We are verily guilty concerning our brother, in that we saw the anguish of his soul when he besought us, and we would not hear; therefore is this distress

come upon us” (Gen. 42:21). Asa, who put the Prophet in stocks, afterward became diseased in his own feet. Paul consented to the stoning of Stephen, yea, assisted in his execution, for his murderers laid down their clothes at his feet; and therefore Paul himself was afterward stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19, 20)—this is the more noteworthy because Barnabas, who was his companion—who had given equal offense in preaching the Gospel was *not* stoned.

And so it is still. Without being guilty of the presumption and uncharitableness which our Saviour condemned when speaking of the Galileans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices and of the people on whom the tower of Siloam fell, yet there are times when we are constrained to acknowledge, “Verily, there is a God that judgeth in the earth” (Psa. 58:11). When we see, as at times we do, the sins of men called to remembrance by the very nature of their punishment, and when we occasionally behold the sinner smitten with the rod of anger while he is in the act of transgression, we cannot doubt that the Ruler of this world is our righteous judge. But it may be objected that the distribution of rewards and punishments is not regular or uniform, that upon the whole the treatment which men receive from Providence is little connected with their character and conduct, yea, that the wicked rather than the righteous are the more successful.

The prosperity of the wicked and the afflictions of the righteous have in all ages presented an acute problem, and it was the observation of Job that, “the tabernacle of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure” (12:6). David declared, “I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree” (Psa. 37:35). Asaph lamented, “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. For there are no bands in their death: but their strength is firm. They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men” (Psa. 73:3-5). After declaring, “Righteous art Thou, O LORD, when I plead with Thee,” Jeremiah asked the Lord, “Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (12:1). Habakkuk also inquired, “Wherefore lookest Thou upon them that deal treacherously, and holdest Thy tongue when the wicked devoureth the man that is more righteous than he?” (Hab 1:13). In Malachi's days there were those who murmured, “It is vain to serve God, and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance . . . They that work wickedness are set up, yea, they that tempt God are even delivered” (3:14, 15). What answer may be given to such questions?

First, God's *Word* does sufficiently declare His displeasure against the wicked and His approbation of the righteous even though His Providence does not. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11) Though the warrant is signed, yet the execution thereof may be suspended for just reasons. Sin is not the less odious to God because He does not immediately inflict its punishment. He delays it to display His infinite patience: bearing ‘with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath.’” Some, like Manasseh and Saul of Tarsus, are spared, that they may become the monuments of His sovereign grace. So, too, God has wise reasons for delaying the rewards of the righteous: that faith may be tested, patience developed, and the sufficiency of His grace to sustain under afflictions demonstrated.

Second, it should be more definitely borne in mind that there are other punishments beside outward afflictions and other rewards beside material prosperity. Alas that we so readily forget this. *Invisible*

*judgments* are the most fearful of all. To be abandoned by God unto blindness of mind, hardness of heart, and terrors of conscience, is far worse than any physical loss or pain! Who can measure what Cain felt when he cried, “my punishment is greater than I can bear”! Who can gauge the depths of remorse felt by Judas ere he went and hanged himself! Contrariwise, the favour of God is expressed unto His own people in the spiritual blessings which He showers upon them. What though the ungodly give them the cold shoulder, if they are conscious of the smile of their heavenly Father! Which is the better, houses and lands, or the comforts of an ungrieved Spirit and a peace which passes all understanding? Assurance of Divine sonship is worth more than silver or gold!

Third, Providence must not be viewed piecemeal, but in its *entirety*; nor by halves, but in its whole frame and connection. We are required to possess our souls in patience on this matter, too, for in His own good time God shall make it unmistakably plain to an assembled universe that He is a righteous Ruler and Judge. In the meanwhile God has good reasons for not yet making a full demonstration of His justice by openly rewarding or punishing men according to their works. This is the day of His patience and not of His wrath—it is the day when we are called upon to walk by faith and not by sight. It is our failure to view Providence as a whole which so often makes us say with Jacob, “all these things are against me,” when in reality, “all things work together for good to them that love God.” But it will only be in the future that this grand fact will be fully evidenced. “Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face: now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known” (1 Cor. 13:12), and what an immeasurable difference this will make!

Fourth, the solemn triumph of the justice of God will fully appear in the *Day to come*. The righteous and the wicked receive but the beginnings of their reward and punishment in this life. Though the wicked are not altogether without punishment yet these are but the *beginning* of sorrows, if we respect either God's external or eternal retribution. The reason for this is not hard to discover: if God should punish no sin here, then none would believe there is a God—if He should punish *all* sin here, none would be afraid of future judgment. “He hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness” (Acts 17:31)—that will be the grand Assize for all mankind, where the Great Judge shall appear in His royalty. At present God keeps but petty sessions, but then will be, “The day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5). Now God's judgment is manifested on a few here and there, but then upon all. Now much of His retribution is disbursed secretly, but then *openly*. Now the punishment is but a temporary one, but then eternal. So, too, with the rewarding of the righteous: here they have but the beginning of their salvation, the fullness thereof being reserved for the world to come, for here, too, we have to walk by faith and not by sight.

Finally, let us point out once more that under the dispensations of Providence the external government of God is so exercised as to provide the world with a sufficient witness of His retributive justice as to give plain warning of what may be expected in the world to come. The occasional instance which we behold of the Divine vengeance upon evildoers are notices that the Ruler of this world is not unmindful of nor indifferent to the actions of His creatures, and they are calculated to excite an expectation that in the future God's justice will be more openly and fully displayed. Divine indifference cannot be fairly inferred from the afflictions of the righteous, since they are compensated for by those spiritual consolations which make them joyful in tribulation and are productive of salutary effects. Here justice is mingled with mercy to the

godly in their sufferings, and mercy is mixed with justice to the wicked in their temporal blessings; but at the last Day it will be fully demonstrated that God is a righteous Judge, keeping strictly to that Law which He has framed for the government of this world. Moreover, at that Day even the wicked shall be sufficiently delivered from the delusions of Satan as to perceive the righteousness of their Judge in His dealings with them.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1940

### **THE GLORIOUS GOSPEL.**

“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). We sincerely trust our readers do not feel that we are running out our meditations on this verse to a wearisome length. Its contents are so full, so marvellous, so blessed, that they might well engage our attention profitably for several more papers thereon. Especially so in view of the fact that there is so very little real doctrinal preaching in this day of superficiality. And even where the people of God have been instructed in the fundamentals of the Gospel, it cannot but refresh and rejoice their hearts to be reminded anew of that which is the wonderment of angels. On this occasion we propose to dwell upon the most important expression in our text.

What is connoted by “the righteousness of God” which we are here said to be made or “become” in Christ? To this a threefold answer may be returned. First, it is a righteousness *provided by God*, for those who have none of their own. Having lost our original righteousness (when Adam sinned) and thereby fallen under condemnation, God, out of the fullness of His grace, provided a righteousness which met every requirement of His Law and secured our salvation, and which upon our believing is placed to our account—in consequence of which we are acquitted from all guilt and given title to the reward of eternal life. This righteousness is one which differs from all other righteousness that ever was or can be performed. It differs entirely from the righteousness of men and angels, for it is the righteousness not of creatures, but of the Creator: “I the LORD have created it” (Isa. 45:8). It is therefore a Divine and infinitely excellent one.

Second, it is a righteousness *effected by God*. The Father created it through the Son, in the same way as by the Son He created the universe (Col. 1:16), and this because the Son is one with Himself; and therefore do we read of “the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:1). Of old God declared, “I bring near My righteousness, it shall not be far off, and My salvation shall not tarry” (Isa. 46:13). It was during His life on earth that this righteousness was wrought out by the incarnate Son. It consisted of that perfect obedience to the Law, both to its precepts and to its penalty, which was yielded to it by our Lord Jesus, who is “the mighty God.” This is the “everlasting righteousness” which has been “brought in” (Dan. 9:24) by Him. The obedience of Immanuel confers more honour upon the Law than the obedience of all intelligent creatures (Isa. 42:21). It was a vicarious obedience which the incarnate Son rendered to the Law, and therefore is He “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6).

Thus it is the righteousness of God not only because it was planned by Him, but also because it was actually performed by the God-man Mediator. At the very moment when He publicly dedicated Himself unto that work for which He came here, He declared, “Thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness” (Matt. 3:15). Though this flawless conformity to the Law was accomplished by the Son of Man, yet He disclaimed all separate praise for the same: “the Father which dwelleth in Me, *He* doeth the works” (John 14:10). That blessed avowal not only expressed the perfections of His human nature as the *obedient* Glorifier of His Maker and Father, but also intimates that all which *He did* was the work also of *God*, for that Man had been taken into personal union with God, and therefore did He affirm, “I and Father are one” (John 10:30).

Third, it is a righteousness *accepted by God*. God is satisfied with the obedience which Christ performed in the place of His people, and signified His approval thereof by bringing from the dead our Surety and seating Him at His own right hand in the heavens. He has received that righteousness as a perfect ransom for us, for it is the price Christ paid to deliver His people from going down to the pit of everlasting destruction, and by which He obtained for them heavenly and eternal glory. And this perfect obedience of Christ is reckoned to the account of all who are joined to Him by *faith*: it is legally transferred to them by Divine imputation; as it is written: “even the righteousness of God . . . upon all them that *believe*” (Rom. 3:22). Faith is no part of that righteousness, but it is through faith it is received and becomes available for salvation. Faith is the belief of the Divine testimony concerning that righteousness and trust in Him who is the Author of it. Faith perceives and acknowledges the suitability and excellence of Christ's righteousness and cordially embraces it.

“That we might be made the righteousness of God in Him.” But before we can have a right to anything in Christ, we must be one with Him, we must be joined to Him as our Head, being dead to the Law and married to Him. That union is accomplished through faith, and therefore His righteousness, which becomes ours in this way, is called “the righteousness of faith” (Rom. 4:13) and “the righteousness which is of God through faith” (Phil. 3:9). It is called the righteousness of “faith” because faith is the only instrument which God is pleased to make use of in applying His righteousness. These grand truths are presented *to faith*, for it is the very nature of faith to seek from its glorious Object what it has not in itself. The doctrine of vicarious imputation is something which is entirely foreign to human experience, originating with Him whose thoughts are not as our thoughts and whose ways are as high above ours as the heavens are above the earth.

This righteousness is “upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). It is not put into them as their sanctification is wrought in the soul by the Spirit, but is placed upon them as a robe: “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). It is the spotless garment which is given by the Lord Jesus to those who hear His voice, that they may be clothed and that the shame of their (soul's) nakedness may not appear (Rev. 3:17). It is the “fine linen,” clean and white, with which the Bride, the Lamb's wife, is arrayed, for the fine linen is “the righteousness of saints” (Rev. 19:8). Thus Jesus Christ is of God made unto His people “righteousness” (1 Cor. 1:30)—His righteousness becomes theirs. As our sins were laid upon Him, so His obedience is put upon us. It is not a righteousness wrought *by* us, but *given to* and *put upon* us.

Here, then, is the great glad tidings, the glorious Gospel: that we are made righteousness in Christ. Carnal wisdom cannot apprehend it, but faith closes with and rejoices in it. However contrary it may be to human reason that guilt should be transferred from the unjust to the Just, and that the surety righteousness of Christ should be imputed to worthless sinners, yet faith submissively accepts the truth and thereby do we learn to know the love of Him with whom we have to do. “To the righteousness of Christ is the eye of the believer forever to be directed. On that righteousness must he rest, on that righteousness must he live, on that righteousness must he die, in that righteousness must he appear before the judgment-seat, in that righteousness must he stand forever in the presence of a righteous God” (Robert Haldane). Well then may we exclaim with the Psalmist, “My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness, Thy salvation all the day . . . I will go in the strength of the LORD God, I will make mention of Thy righteousness, of *Thine only*” (71:15, 16).—A.W.P.

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### THE JUSTICE OF GOD.

We have seen that the justice of God in His government of this world is manifested in the consciences of men and in the dispensations of Providence. Let us now behold how it is evidenced in *the work of redemption*. Here it has pleased the Most High to give a signal demonstration of His righteousness according to the requirements of that law which He has framed. Nowhere are the principles of the Divine administration exhibited so plainly as here, yet nowhere, we may add, is it so imperative for us to be completely subject to the Scriptures if our thoughts thereon are to honour the Lord God. If the works of creation contain mysteries which are beyond our powers to solve, and if the dispensations of Providence are often sorely perplexing, the yet grander work of redemption—God's masterpiece—must fill with reverent awe those who endeavour to contemplate its method and meaning. Only as we interpret by the light of Holy Writ the amazing anomaly of the Just suffering for the unjust shall we be preserved from the most horrible errors.

In connection with the work of redemption we are confronted with the astonishing spectacle of a Person whom even His worst enemies acknowledged to be free from the slightest stain of impurity. And of whose moral conduct Heaven itself testified an unqualified approbation, spending His days in such affliction and ending His career in such anguish that He was denominated “the Man of Sorrows.” If guilt precedes affliction and is the cause of it, then to behold the Holy One enduring the unabated curse of the Law presents a problem which human wisdom is utterly incapable of solving. Yea, it is at *this* very point that the blasphemies of infidels have raved the loudest. But this is exactly what Scripture leads us to expect, for

it plainly tells us that the preaching of Christ crucified is “unto the Jews a stumblingblock and unto the Greeks foolishness.” Yet this same passage at once adds, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God” (1 Cor. 1:23, 24).

The light of Divine revelation removes what is a stumblingblock to those who walk in darkness. So far from the Scriptures uttering the least apology for God in His appointment of Christ unto death, they declare, “Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood, to *declare His righteousness* for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.” So far from the death of Christ casting the slightest reflection upon God's justice, this very passage repeats: “To declare, I say, at this time His righteousness: that He might be *just* and the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom. 3:24-26). The Lord Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for sin has been exhibited for this very end, to demonstrate the righteousness of God in this greatest transaction of all time, so that He now acquits the guiltiest transgressor who trusts in the Saviour without infringing the rights of His government; yea, manifesting and magnifying His very justice in so doing.

Though personally innocent of the slightest infraction of God's Law, yea, though rendering to it a perfect and perpetual obedience, yet the Lord Jesus Christ suffered vicariously as the Substitute of His people. Nor was this fearful sacrifice forced upon Him against His own will: rather did He freely assume the office of Surety and voluntarily discharge its duties. It must ever be borne in mind that He who presented Himself as the Sponsor of God's elect possessed rights and prerogatives which belong to no mere creature. He was complete master of His own life. He voluntarily assumed our nature and held His life for the purpose of surrendering it as a ransom for us. He Himself made this unmistakably plain when He declared, “Therefore doth My Father love Me, because I lay down My life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from Me, but I *lay it down of Myself*. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again” (John 10:17, 18). If One who was innocent voluntarily received the wages of sin, then God's hatred of sin was unmistakably manifested, the authority of His government maintained, and the requirements of His justice fully satisfied.

From earliest times this apparent travesty of justice—an innocent victim being slaughtered in the place of the guilty—held a prominent place in the Divine appointments for His people. The Divine institution of propitiatory sacrifices and their abundant use under the economy God framed, was solemnly unforced by that penal statute, “And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set My face against that soul that eateth blood and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul” (Lev. 17:10, 11). Of such frequent application, of such varied utility, and of such high importance was the expiatory *blood* of sacrifices that the Holy Spirit moved an Apostle to say, “And almost all things are by the law purged with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission” (Heb. 9:22).

What striking and emphatic declarations are those: the blood makes an atonement for the soul—almost all things were purged by blood—no remission without the shedding of blood. As no blood was expiatory except that which was poured out in sacrifice *to God*, that which brought *death* on the victim, and that in

which the death of a victim was vicarious—God kept constantly before His people under the typical system of worship the fact that pardon would not be dispensed to transgressors nor communion with Himself enjoyed except in strict connection with a display of punitive justice. But though the propitiatory sacrifices were so many testimonies to Jehovah's purity, so many evidences of His righteousness, yet in their nature, application and efficacy they did not extend to the burdened conscience but were limited to the removal of ceremonial defilement and to a typical prefiguration of the Messiah's priestly work. They were so far from fully exhibiting the governmental perfections of God that they were merely shadows and pre-intimations of that which was to be manifested when “the fullness of time should come.”

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins. Wherefore when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come, (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. . . by the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb. 10:4-10). Here is the grand transition from the *shadows* to the Substance. The typical sacrifices were inadequate for displaying the righteousness of God, and therefore were they superceded by the all-sufficient Sacrifice. None other than the Son of God Himself took upon Him our humanity (immaculately conceived) and came into this world to do in reality what had been previously prefigured of Him.

In the above passage our blessed Redeemer stands forth as a voluntary victim, completely qualified to make full expiation of sin. Confident of His own perfect qualifications to perform the arduous work, absolutely willing to undergo all the bitterness of the sufferings involved therein, he announced His readiness to discharge the greatest undertaking of all. But let us carefully note, once more, how everything is resolved unto the Divine WILL. “Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God” (Heb. 10:9): that will which had been formulated in His “eternal purpose” (Eph. 3:11), which had been expressed in the terms of the Everlasting Covenant, which had been freely accepted by the Mediator Himself, and which had been made known in the Scriptures of Truth. That “will” involved the magnifying of God's Law and rendering it honourable (Isa. 42:21). It involved the Son's becoming the federal Representative of His people, His entering into the office of Surety, His serving as their Substitute, and His making expiation for their sins. And by that same “will” we are saved. How clearly this confirms what we have said in a previous article.

It would take us too far afield for us now to enter into a discussion of the nature, design, and effects of the Atonement, rather must we confine ourselves to the relation which the Satisfaction of Christ had unto the demonstrating of God's governmental perfections under the economy He had instituted. The fundamental feature of that economy is that the Lord God has placed His rational creatures under law, and that He administers this law with strict impartiality, enforcing its sanctions without respect of persons. The climactic proof of this appears in the plan God formed for the salvation of His elect. He did not sovereignly pardon their iniquities without any satisfaction being rendered to His broken Law, but appointed His own Son to enter their stead and place and be made a curse for them, experiencing in His own Person the unabated penalty of that Law, so that they may be righteously discharged. This it is which alone explains the unparalleled sufferings of the Saviour.

What has just been pointed out alone accounts for the agony of our Redeemer prior to the Cross. Before

any human hand was laid upon Him, before any human enemy came near Him, He exclaimed, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death” (Matt. 26:38). Behold Him prostrate in the Garden: He was in an agony of mental distress: He sweat great drops of blood: engaged in “strong crying and tears.” Observe Him on the cruel Tree. With unmeasurable magnanimity He interceded for His crucifiers. With royal majesty and unparalleled mercy He allotted a place in Paradise to one of the malefactors dying by His side. But before He yielded up His spirit He cried, “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” There is only one adequate cause for such unspeakable anguish, namely, His vicarious Character, His bearing imputed sin (for He had none of His own), His undergoing the curse of the Law in the stead of those who were justly condemned by it.

Scripture speaks so plainly on this momentous subject that there is no excuse for any misunderstanding of its meaning. Christ was “wounded for *our* transgressions, bruised for *our* iniquities: the chastisement of *our* peace was upon Him” (Isa. 53:5). And why so? Because God made His Son to be “sin for us, who knew no sin” (2 Cor. 5:21), because “the Lord made the iniquity of us all to meet on Him” (Isa. 53:6), because “His own self bear our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). And what was the consequence? This—Jehovah cried, “Awake O sword, against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the Shepherd” (Zech. 13:7). Under the regime God has instituted, sin must be punished wherever it be found and no exception was made even of the spotless Lamb when the iniquities of His people were transferred to Him. Hence we are told that the Sinbearer was “smitten of God” and again, “it pleased the LORD to bruise Him” (Isa. 53:4, 10).

It is, then, in the work of redemption that we behold the clearest, the most solemn, and yet the grandest display of God's righteousness. Therein we learn His estimate of sin, His holy abhorrence of it, the nature and severity of His sentence upon it. Not only does the work of redemption exhibit the exceeding riches of Divine mercy in the pardon of deservedly condemned criminals, but it manifests the inexorable and awe-inspiring character of Divine justice in the tremendous punishment of sin inflicted upon the Holy Lamb. The more we prayerfully contemplate the Father's conduct in connection with the obedience and sufferings of His dear Son, the more clearly do we behold Him vindicating the honour of His broken Law, satisfying the claims of His penal justice, furnishing incontestable proof of His equity and veracity, and thereby is He set forth as One who is infinitely worthy to superintend the universe and to govern this world.

Finally, the justice of God will be openly manifested *at the end of this world*, when the present administration terminates: then will be “the day of wrath and *revelation of the righteous judgment of God*” (Rom. 2:5). The ends of justice, so far as they consist in retribution, would be answered by the sentence pronounced upon every individual immediately after death, for it is enough that the state of men in the next world conform to their characters and conduct in this. But the Grand Assize is designed for the final manifestation of God's justice before an assembled universe, to bring it out of any obscurity and uncertainty in which it is partly veiled under the varied dispensations of Providence, and to demonstrate once and for all that the Ruler of Heaven and earth is no respecter of persons. Then shall the books be opened, fair trial accorded, all the evidence adduced and every man shall “receive according to his works.” The wicked will then be convicted that each one has received the due reward of his iniquities, while the righteous will exclaim, “Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (Rev. 6:7).

Let us now endeavour, though very briefly, to improve this important subject in a doctrinal and practical manner. First, such manifestations of the Divine justice as have been before us should indeed promote the exercise of *deep humility* before God in all our devotional intercourse with Him. O fellow-Christian, if we apprehend in any measure this most solemn truth of the Divine justice, we must surely feel the propriety of that precept, “Let us have grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear: for our God is a consuming fire” (Heb. 12:28, 29). There is far more danger of real believers approaching the Father of mercies in a careless, carnal, and formal manner, than there is of them drawing near to Him under the influence of painful timidity or of a desponding temper. We should endeavour to acquire a settled habit of reminding ourselves that the Object of our worship is One who is “glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders.” Such a view of God is adapted to arouse solemnity, excite reverence, and promote submission.

Second, such manifestations of Divine justice as have been before us should warm our hearts and enkindle *the spirit of praise*. O what a difference it makes whether that justice is for or against us. The justice is now *for* the weakest and most unworthy believer, for the simple but sufficient reason it was *against* his blessed Redeemer. Payment God cannot twice demand: first at our bleeding Surety's hand, and then again at ours. Because the sword of Divine justice was sheathed in the side of the Substitute, I go free. Because He received the wages of sin in my place, my debts are fully discharged. Because He rendered to the Law a vicarious obedience which magnified and made it honourable, His perfect righteousness is reckoned to my account. Because I have put my trust in His finished work, I am justified from all things. Surely, then, I must exclaim, “my mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day” (Psa. 71:15). O what praise and devotion are due Him. “I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10).

Third, such manifestations of Divine justice as have been before us constitute an unspeakably solemn *warning to the unsaved*. While the consideration of God's righteousness must fill believers with peace and joy, yet it is a fearful thing for the Christless to contemplate. It is a justice which is inflexible, inexorable, and immutable. It is a justice which is never set aside by sentimental considerations, and which cannot be bought with promises or bribed by tears. The solemn truth of God's justice addresses the consciences of those who are secure in their sins, saying, “What meanest thou, O sleeper, arise, call upon thy God.” It speaks with the voice of thunder, maintaining the reasonableness of that obedience which the Law requires, the equity of the sanctions by which it is enforced, and the inflexibility of the Legislator to execute His threatened curse upon its transgressors. If God “*spared not* His own Son,” most certainly He will not spare any who finally despise and reject Him. Even now His wrath is upon them (John 3:36), and except they repent, soon shall they feel the full force of it in the Lake of Fire.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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July, 1941

### **A WORD TO PARENTS.**

Owing to lack of space we could intimate and enforce only one side of the requirement enjoined by the Fifth Commandment: the deplorable conditions now existing on every hand demand that we press the other side also. Under this Commandment are included the responsibilities of parents toward their children and masters toward their servants, as well as those of children and servants unto their superiors. This is quite clear from the opening verses of Ephesians 6 (which contain an exposition of the Fifth Commandment), where the Apostle begins with the duties of children toward their parents and then immediately follows with the duties of parents toward their children, and after instructing servants he at once proceeded to instruct their masters. We shall here confine ourselves to the former.

One of the saddest and most tragic features of our twentieth-century "Civilization" is the awful prevalence of disobedience on the part of children to their parents during the days of childhood, and their lack of reverence and respect when they grow up. This is evidenced in many ways, and is general, alas, even in the families of professing Christians. In his extensive travels during the past thirty years the writer has sojourned in a great many homes: the piety and beauty of some of them remain sacred and fragrant memories: but others of them have left the most painful impressions. Children who are self-willed or spoilt not only bring themselves into perpetual unhappiness, but inflict discomfort upon all who come into contract with them, and auger evil things for the days to come.

In the vast majority of cases the children are not nearly so much to be blamed as the parents. Failure to

honour father and mother, wherever it is found, is in large measure due to the parental departure from the Scriptural pattern. Nowadays the father considers he has fulfilled his obligations by providing food and raiment for his children, and by acting occasionally as a species of moral policeman. Too often the mother is content to be a domestic drudge, making herself the slave of her children instead of training them to be useful, performing many a task which her daughters should do, in order to allow them freedom for the frivolities of a giddy set. The consequence has been that the home which ought to be—for its orderliness, its sanctity, and its reign of love—a miniature Heaven on earth, has degenerated into “a filling station for the day and a parking place for the night” as someone has tersely expressed it.

Before outlining the duties of parents toward their children, let it be pointed out that they cannot properly discipline their children unless they have first learned to *govern themselves*. How can they expect to subdue self-will in their little ones and check the rise of an angry temper, if their own passions are allowed free rein? The character of parents is to a very large degree reproduced in their offspring: “And Adam lived a hundred and thirty years and begat a son in his own likeness after his image” (Gen. 5:3). The parent must himself or herself be in subjection to God if they may lawfully expect obedience from their little ones. This principle is enforced in Scripture again and again: “thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?” (Rom. 2:21). Of the bishop or pastor it is written that he must be, “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity. For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God” (1 Tim. 3:4, 5). And if a man or woman know not how to rule their own spirit (Prov. 25:28), how shall they care for their offspring?

God has entrusted to parents a most solemn charge and yet a most precious privilege. It is not too much to say that in *their* hands are deposited the hope and blessing, or else the curse and plague, of the next generation. Their families are the nurseries of both Church and State, and according to the cultivating of them now such will be their fruitfulness hereafter. O how prayerfully and carefully should they discharge their trust! Most assuredly God will require an account of the children from their parents' hands, for they are His, and only lent to your care and keeping. The task assigned you is no easy one, especially in these superlatively evil days. Nevertheless, if trustfully and earnestly sought, the grace of God will be found sufficient here as elsewhere. The Scriptures supply us with rules to go by, with promises to lay hold of, and we may add, with fearful warnings lest you treat the matter lightly.

We have space to mention but four of the principal duties devolving on parents. First, *to instruct* their children. “And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deut. 6:6, 7). This work is far too important to allocate unto others: *parents*, and not Sunday School teachers, are Divinely required to educate their little ones. Nor is this to be an occasional or sporadic thing, but one that is to have constant attention. The glorious character of God, the requirements of His holy Law, the exceeding sinfulness of sin. The wondrous gift of His Son, and the fearful doom which is the certain portion of all who despise and reject Him, are to be brought repeatedly before the minds of the little ones. “They are too young to understand such things” is the Devil's argument to deter you from discharging your duty.

“And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath: but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of

the Lord” (Eph. 6:4). It is to be noted that the “fathers” are here specifically addressed, and this for two reasons: because they are the *head* of the family and its government is especially committed to them, and because they are prone to transfer this duty unto their wives. This instruction is to be given by reading to them the Holy Scriptures and enlarging upon those things most agreeable to their age. This should be followed by catechising them. A continued discourse to the young is not nearly so effective as when it is diversified by questions and answers. If they know they will be questioned on what you read, they will listen more closely: the formulating of answers teaches them to think for themselves. Such a method is also found to make the memory more retentive, for answering definite questions fixes more specific ideas in the mind. Observe how often Christ asked His disciples questions.

Second, good instruction is to be accompanied by good example. That teaching which issues only from the lips is not at all likely to sink any deeper than the ears. Children are particularly quick to detect inconsistencies, and despise hypocrisy. It is at this point parents need to be most on their faces before God, daily seeking from Him that grace which they so sorely need and which He alone can supply. What care they need to take lest they say or do anything before their children which would tend to corrupt their minds or be of evil consequence for them to follow. How they need to be constantly on their guard against anything which might render them mean and contemptible in the eyes of those who should respect and revere them! The parent is not only to instruct his children in the ways of holiness, but is himself to walk before them in those ways, and show by his practice and demeanour what a pleasant and profitable thing it is to be regulated by the Divine Law.

In a Christian home the supreme aim should be *household piety*—the honouring of God at all times—everything else being subordinated thereto. In the matter of family life neither husband nor wife can throw on the other all the responsibility for the religious character of the home. The mother is most certainly required to supplement the efforts of the father, for the children enjoy far more of her company than they do of his. If there is a tendency in fathers to be too strict and severe, mothers are prone to be too lax and lenient, and they need to be much on their guard against anything which would weaken their husbands' authority: when he has forbidden a thing, she must not give her consent to it. It is striking to note that the exhortation of Ephesians 6:4 is preceded by, “be filled with the Spirit” (5:18), while the parallel exhortation in Colossians 3:21 is preceded by “let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly” (v. 16), showing that parents cannot possibly discharge their duties unless they are filled with the Spirit and the Word.

Third, instruction and example is to be enforced by *correction and discipline*. This means, first of all, the exercise of authority—the proper reign of law. Of the father of the faithful, God said, “For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the LORD, to do justice and judgment; that the LORD may bring upon Abraham that which He hath spoken of him” (Gen. 18:19). Ponder this carefully, Christian fathers. Abraham did more than proffer good advice: he enforced law and order in his household. The rules he administered had for their design the keeping of “the way of the Lord”—that which was right in His sight. And this duty was performed by the Patriarch in order that the blessing of God might rest on his family. No family can be properly brought up without household laws, which include reward and punishment, and these are especially important in early childhood, when as yet moral character is unformed and moral motives are not understood or appreciated.

Rules should be simple, clear, reasonable and inflexible like the Ten Commandments—a few great moral rules, instead of a multitude of petty restrictions. One way of needlessly provoking children to wrath is to hamper them with a thousand trifling restrictions and minute regulations that are capricious and are due to a fastidious temper in the parent. It is of vital importance for the child's future good that he or she should be brought into subjection at an early age: an untrained child means a lawless adult—our prisons are crowded with those who were allowed to have their own way during their minority. The least offense of a child against the rules of the home ought not to pass without due correction, for if it find leniency in one direction or toward one offense, it will expect the same toward others, and then disobedience will become more frequent till the parent has no control save that of brute force.

The teaching of Scripture is crystal clear on this point. “Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him” (Prov. 22:15 and cf. 23:13, 14). Therefore has God said, “He that spareth the rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov. 13:24). And again, “Chasten thy son while there is yet hope, and let not thy soul spare for his crying” (Prov. 19:18). Let not a foolish fondness stay you: certainly God loves His children with a much deeper parental affection than you can love yours, yet he tells us, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten” (Rev. 3:19 and cf. Heb. 12:6). “The rod and reproof give wisdom: but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame” (Prov. 29:15). Such severity must be used in their early years, before age and obstinacy have hardened the child against the fear and smart of correction. Spare the rod, and you spoil the child: use it not on him, and you lay up one for your own back.

It should hardly need pointing out that the above Scriptures are far from inculcating that a reign of terror is to mark the home life. Children can be governed and punished in such a way that they do not lose their respect and affection to their parents. Beware of souring their temper by unreasonable demands, or provoking their wrath by smiting them to vent your own rage. The parent is to punish a disobedient child not because he is angry, but because it is *right*—because God requires it, and the welfare of the child demands it. Never make a threat which you have no intention of executing, nor a promise you do not mean to perform. Remember that for your children to be well informed is good, but for them to be well controlled is better.

Pay close attention to the unconscious influences of a child's surroundings. Study to make your home attractive: not by introducing carnal and worldly things, but by noble ideals, by inculcating a spirit of unselfishness, by genial and happy fellowship. Separate the little ones from evil associates. Watch carefully the periodicals and books which come into the home, the occasional guests which sit at the table, and the companionships your children form. Parents carelessly let people have free access to their children who undermine their authority, overturn their ideals, and sow seeds of frivolity and iniquity before they are aware. Never let your child spend a night among strangers. So train your girls that they will be useful and helpful members of their generation, and your boys that they will be industrious and self-supporting.

Fourth, the last and most important duty, respecting both the temporal and spiritual good of your children, is  *fervent supplication to God*  for them, for without this all the rest will be ineffectual. Means are unavailing unless the Lord blesses them. The Throne of Grace is to be earnestly implored so that your efforts to bring up your children for God may be crowned with success. True, there must be a humble

submission to His sovereign will, a bowing before the truth of Election. On the other hand, it is the privilege of faith to lay hold of the Divine promises and to remember that the effectual fervent prayers of a righteous man availeth much. Of holy Job it is recorded concerning his sons and daughters that he “rose up early in the morning and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all” (1:5). A prayerful atmosphere should pervade the home and be breathed by all who share it.—A.W.P.

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August, 1941

### **INWARD IMPRESSIONS.**

This is a subject which is rarely touched upon today, yet in certain quarters especially there is a real need that it should be dealt with. By inward impressions we have reference to some passage of Scripture or some verse of a hymn being laid upon the mind with such force that it rivets the attention, absorbs the entire inner man and is accompanied by such an influence, that the partaker thereof is deeply affected. For example: a person may have lived a most godless life, utterly unconcerned about spiritual things and eternal interests, when suddenly (perhaps while he was indulging the lusts of the flesh, his thoughts being entirely occupied with carnal objects), there sounded in his conscience the words, "Be sure your sin will find you out." So forcibly is he impressed, it seems as though someone must have audibly uttered those words, and he turns to discover the speaker, only to find he is alone. So deep is the impression, he cannot shake it off, and he is convicted of his lost condition and made to seek the Saviour.

No doubt each one who reads the above paragraph has heard or read some such case, perhaps many like it. And quite possibly a number of our readers are distressed in that there has been nothing in their own experience which corresponds thereto, and because there is not, they greatly fear they have never been truly converted. But such an inference is quite unwarranted. God does not act uniformly in the work of regeneration, any more than He does in creation or in providence; and we have met many who never had any such experience as we have described above, yet whose salvation we could not doubt for a moment. "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh and whither it goeth: so is everyone that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8). Sometimes the wind blows with

great velocity, at other times very gently and almost imperceptibly. But how foolish I would be if, seeing the leaves moving in the breeze, I denied the wind was blowing at all, merely because it came not with hurricane intensity!

The blowing of the wind is to be ascertained by the effects produced. Necessarily so, for the wind is invisible. But though the wind be invisible, the *results* it produces are not so: they can be seen and felt, and it is by the breeze on our face and the stirring of the leaves that we perceive its actions, even though trees are not being uprooted thereby. “So is everyone that is born of the Spirit.” The Holy Spirit is invisible, yet His presence may be ascertained by the effects which He produces. Sometimes He comes to a soul as it were in gale force, striking terror into the heart and carrying everything before Him: sweeping away the refuge of lies in which we were sheltering, tearing down our self-righteousness at a single stroke, and bowing us in conscious fear and conviction before Him. Thus it was in the case of Saul of Tarsus. But He does not always act thus—to other souls He comes as the gentle dove, so that His operations are imperceptible at the time, like the cases of Nathanael and Lydia.

A gardener sows his seed and for a while knows not whether his effort is going to meet with any success. He scans his ground, but as yet sees no results. Perhaps he begins to worry, fearing that his soil is unsuited to such vegetables or flowers. But a little later his fears are dispelled: the appearing of green shoots above the earth is the proof that his seed has germinated. Here is one deeply exercised about his state. He has sat under the preaching of some faithful servant of Christ and has sought to appropriate unto himself the Word of Life. But into what kind of soil (heart) has that Seed found abode? Is he but a wayside, a stony, a thorny, or a good-ground hearer (Matt. 13)?—*that* is the question which causes him so much concern. And rightly so, for there are very few good-ground hearers. And *how* is his problem to be solved? How is he to make sure whether he is a good-ground hearer? By the *results*, the fruits produced in his life.

But to return more directly to the point of inward impressions. After reading the last three paragraphs, probably some are inclined to say, Until I experience something like what you describe in the opening paragraph I shall be afraid to regard myself as genuinely converted: I must be sure that the Gospel has come to me not “in word only, but also *in power* and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:5). A very wise decision, my friend. But *how* are you going to determine whether the Gospel has come to you “in power and in the Holy Spirit?” By your senses? By your emotions? By some sentence of Scripture being deeply impressed on your mind? *That* is not the right way of ascertaining. It is easy to be deceived at this point, for Satan can deeply impress the mind and stir the emotions, and when it serves his purpose employ the very words of Scripture, as he did when tempting the Saviour Himself. No, it is by some other, some surer way than that, you must determine your spiritual state.

Whether or not the Gospel has come to me “in power and in the Holy Spirit” is to be ascertained by *the effects produced in me*: not transient effects, but permanent; not simply in my consciousness, but in my life. If the Gospel has come to me “in power,” it has made me realize that I am a lost sinner—guilty and undone—it has made me realize that I can do nothing to save myself, nothing which can win God's favour. If the Gospel has come to me “in power,” it has shut me up to Christ! It has not only revealed my dire need of Him, but has shown me how perfectly suited He is to my case, and how ready and willing He is to cleanse me from my sins and to heal my wounds. If the Gospel has come to me “in power,” it has made

me come to Christ as an empty-handed beggar, casting myself on His mercy, and closing with His gracious offer to receive and by no means cast me out. If I have done this, it matters not an iota whether some particular verse of Scripture has been deeply impressed on my mind or not.

In the same way we may arrive at a well-grounded assurance of our acceptance with God. There are some who can testify that for a long season they remained in Doubting Castle, wondering whether they were the children of God or whether they were not. When suddenly the Lord spoke those words to their troubled souls, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love.” That text came to them with such sweetness and power, that their soul was quite melted down and all their fears were removed. But there are many gracious souls who have never shared this experience: no specific verse of Scripture has been impressed upon them, discovering that they are the Lord's. Are we then to assume, must *they* conclude, that the absence of such an experience is proof they are yet in a state of nature? By no means. Yea, we go further: a Scripturally grounded assurance must rest upon a surer foundation than that, one that is less variable and more durable.

However powerfully a verse may be impressed on the mind, that impression will gradually fade. However sweet and melting may be the accompanying effect, it will not remain with us. Frames and feelings are but evanescent, and *Satan may be the inspirer of them*. The Scriptural method for obtaining assurance is for us to prayerfully and impartially examine and test ourselves by the Word of God, to see whether or not we bear in ourselves those marks by which God's children are described and may be identified: such as mourning over sin, hungering after righteousness, grieving over unbelief, longing for conformity to Christ's image, separation from the world, walking in the way of God's commandments, distrust of self, praying daily for Divine grace. “The testimony of an enlightened conscience, judging by the Word of God, and deciding in our favour, that by His grace we have been enabled to take up the yoke of Christ, is in some respects a more satisfactory evidence that we are His and He is ours, than if an angel were sent from Heaven to tell us that our names are written in the Book of Life” (John Newton).

But let us not be misunderstood about what we have said above. Most certainly we do not deny that many of God's people have had verses of Scripture powerfully impressed upon their minds, nor is it our purpose here to discount the value and comfort of such an experience. No; rather do we desire to point out the tendency of many to ascribe a greater virtue to them than they justly possess, and to warn against some of the dangers attaching thereto. We have met those who attributed more importance to inward impressions than they did to outward walking in God's precepts—who would rather have a verse of Scripture laid with power on their mind than to have its spiritual meaning opened to their understanding—who placed a higher value on the comfort they received from some promise being spoken to them than they did of grace being given to deny self, take up the cross and follow Christ outside the camp.

If you ask some professing Christians, who are thoroughly carnal and worldly, what is the ground of their hope for eternity, they will tell you they have no fear of the judgment to come because at such and such a time a certain Scripture was “given to” or “spoken to” them, and on that impression they rest, without knowing anything personally and experimentally of the sanctifying operations of the Holy Spirit. We have no hesitation in saying that such people have been misled by their own deceitful hearts, or deluded by Satan posing as an angel of light. On the other hand, were we to approach some, whom charity requires us

to account regenerated persons, yet who are altogether lacking in assurance and full of doubts, and inquire of them the ground of such fears about their state, they would answer, "I never have had a Scripture promise applied to me as other Christians have, and therefore I must conclude that I am not an heir to God's promises." These poor souls need to be taught the way of the Lord more perfectly.

That which we wish to particularly press upon the reader is the vital importance and imperative necessity of his faith resting upon a sure foundation: that sure foundation is the *Word of God* and not any painful convictions or happy feelings we may have experienced; not resting on some deep impressions on our mind of some passage of Scripture, but on the Scripture itself. It is not a question of how complete a discovery has been made to me of the plague of my heart or how utterly vile I see and feel myself to be, but have I really taken the place of a sinner before God which matters the most. It is not do I sufficiently feel my need of Christ or do I clearly enough discern His excellencies and suitability to my case, but have I betaken myself to the sinner's Saviour and received Him as my own by a childlike faith? Nor is it the degree or strength of faith which renders it efficacious: no matter how weak it is, if it clings to *the right Object* it is sufficient.

Not only is there the danger of being deceived by Satan, and of resting our faith on a wrong foundation, but those who prize so highly these inward impressions generally turn for comfort to a fickle source. Even former experiences of God's kindness and present marks of grace within the soul, while good in their place, are like marks on a sundial, which say nothing in a cloudy and dark day, say nothing when the sun shines not. If we would have our comfort rest on a solid and unchanging foundation, we must betake ourselves to immediate and direct *believing*, making Christ and His righteousness the sole ground of our peace. Happy feelings and evidences of grace are to be made matters of comfort only as they are agreeable to the unerring rule of God's Word and as the Spirit breathes upon us, and by that Word in our heart bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God.

The tendency to draw a false inference from the absence of such inward impressions has been mentioned above, but let us now enlarge a little thereon. It is highly probable that God often withholds the sealing testimony of His Spirit from some souls, not because they are yet in a state of nature, but because they make *an idol* of comfortable feelings. The only sure ground of faith is the Word of God and the Truth there spoken, and not our feelings. Comfortable feeling is not to be expected before we believe the Word of promise. If we have any feeling of God's love before our believing of His love, then we shall be foolish enough to build our faith upon transient frames and influences. Many *do* go wrong at this very point and build their faith on *feelings* of God's love rather than upon what He has said, and as their feelings constantly fluctuate so does their faith. This is the reason why there is no stability in such: on the mountain-top one day, in the slough of despond the next.

God is jealous, and therefore does He often withhold the comforts of His Spirit until we give Him the glory of His Truth by believing His love as it is revealed in the Scriptures. The woman with the issue of blood had no sensible feeling of virtue coming from Christ until she touched the hem of His garment (Luke 8:43-48). Grieve not if a sense of the plague of your heart keeps you poor and needy, empty and humble: Christ and His fullness will then be the more precious. Remember it is God's way to *humble* before He exalts. Not only has the Lord "heard the desire of the *humble*," but the assurance is given,

“Thou wilt establish their heart” (Psa. 10:17 margin). Blessed indeed is that promise, “He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth the needy out of the dunghill; that He may set him with princes, even with the princes of His people” (Psa. 113:7, 8)—a promise which belongs to no wealthy, puffed up, and self-satisfied Laodicean.

God's way of bringing home His promises to the hearts of His people varies considerably. If you are able to plead a promise and make it a matter of prayer before God, that is much to be thankful for. If the promise comes not to you, go you to the promise of the Word and carry it to the Throne of Grace. Say to the Lord, Here is a promise which is suited to my case: may it please Your gracious Majesty to set it on my heart to my comfort. Depend more on the promise itself than on any felt power and sensible influence in which it may come to you: the latter may vary, the former remains unchanged. God is most glorified when we go *out of ourselves* and rely wholly on what He is in Himself. Faith is strongest and healthiest when we live on bare promises without the supports of sense. Give God the credit for His veracity. Seek rest not in the streams of blessing and comfort, but in the Fountain.

When a looking and waiting for these inward impressions becomes the rule of duty, the ground of faith, and the foundation of comfort, the Word of God is grievously slighted, if not altogether set aside. A Divinely-given faith answers or responds to God's faithfulness in the promise, just as it stands in the written Word, without expecting or looking for any further confirmation of the warrant of faith. But a faith which answers to something other than the bare Word of God—to some impressions of it on the mind with light and power—is a fanciful faith, for it makes these impressions and feelings the ground and warrant of believing. How justly may God deliver up to delusion those who make an idol of their feelings and refuse to rest directly on that Word of Truth in which alone the Divine faithfulness is pledged.

A Divinely-given faith perceives the naked promise of God, as it is proclaimed in the gracious call and free offer of the Gospel, to be a sure and sufficient foundation for faith to rest upon, without any powerful impressions of it on the mind. If such impressions and comforts *are* given, they are not looked upon as affording any better warrant or surer title to believe the promise than they had before, nor do the possessors of such faith regard impressions and feelings—no, not even if they are still further brought before them in a vision or dream—as rendering the promise more sure of accomplishment than it was previously as recorded in the Holy Scriptures. A faith which will not rest on God's bare promise, which dare not meddle with it as it stands in the written Word until it has additional warrant from inward impressions, is a fanciful and worthless faith.

A Divinely-given faith stands not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; whereas a faith which has impressions for its foundation and comfortable feelings for its object, stands in the wisdom of the author of such impressions and feelings, whom we greatly fear is in many instances an *evil spirit*, who finding other methods unsuccessful transforms himself as an angel of light that he may delude the unwary. Satan is determined to be worshipped in one way or another, and if he cannot secure our homage through the grosser baits by which he catches others, he will make use of our convictions and emotions. When any impression of which he is the author is *rested in*, he has gained his object and attained his desire. It matters not to him whether wood or iron, silver or gold, or happy frames be our idol, so long as it *be our idol*.

A Divinely-given faith will honour God and His Word without impressions, comfortable feelings, or even the endorsement of reason—yea, *against* the dictates of reason. Such was the faith of Abraham, the father of all them that believe. For when God promised him a son in his old age, he “considered not his own body now dead, when he was about a hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah's womb: he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God” (Rom. 4:19, 20). Such is the faith of God's elect: not merely a fair-weather commodity, but a supernatural grace which surmounts the storm. But a faith which rests on impressions is extinguished as soon as the impression wears off: such a faith fails its possessor in the cloudy and dark day, for its foundation is but a sandy and shifting one. Then look well, my reader, to your faith: to its origin, to the foundation it rests upon, to its enduring power.—A.W.P.

N.B. How striking and blessed is it to observe the course followed by the Lord Jesus when He was tempted of Satan. Just previously an audible voice from Heaven had witnessed to His Divine Sonship, yet when the Devil assaulted Him, saying, “If Thou be the Son of God,” how did He repulse the Enemy's attack? Not by saying, “I know that I am the Son of God because I have recently heard the voice of My Father testifying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.' ” No, He did not: instead, He had recourse to the written Word alone, saying, “It is written.” “It is written again,” “It is written!” And this, dear reader, was recorded for *our* instruction. Here, too, the Saviour has left His people an example that they should follow His steps.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1941

### **MINISTERIAL DIRECTIONS.**

Permit me to give you a few hasty thoughts on the great work of the ministry, and may the Lord the Spirit be pleased to set them home with power on your heart. You have now put your hand to the plow; never think of turning or looking back, but seek with all diligence and perseverance after those things that are necessary to qualify you for the discharge of that momentous work whereunto you are called. I recommend you to be very diligent in reading the Scriptures: they are the store-house from whence you must draw all your materials for building God's house. Get well acquainted with the leading doctrines of grace, and endeavour to see all originate from the everlasting love and purpose of the Almighty. Get as clear views as possible of the sufficiency of Jesus Christ, that the foundation may be rightly laid, for herein lies the masterpiece of wisdom.

Be deeply impressed with this truth: that success lies not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; that there must be another Teacher besides you, if any work be done to purpose. Presume not upon supernatural assistance, lest you run into enthusiasm. It is easy to say, "I will trust in the Lord," at the time, which is no better than a cloak for idleness and want of due preparation. I could wish you to be rather timorous and backward to pulpit-duty, than bold and forward; the one is a sign of humility, the other of pride and self-sufficiency, especially in a young minister. There are none more fearful than the able, none more bold than the unworthy. Come, after much private prayer, into the pulpit.

This I look upon as a good method. Let your subject-matter be proposed in a clear and distinct manner:

three or four particulars are sufficient to be spoken on. It has been a fault long among some ministers to run into a great number of divisions and sub-divisions. Two or three texts well chosen for confirmation of any point of doctrine are better than twenty; the former can be easily remembered, the latter perplexes the audience. Let your applications be short and pithy, and let them be used after each particular head—which I think is better than reserving all to the conclusion of your discourse. Advance nothing positively that you have not a full experience of in your own heart: what comes from the heart of the speaker, goes to the heart of the hearer. If you go out of your depth, by authority of Scripture only, let it be proposed with modesty.

Affect not pompous but plain language, and beware of showing the pedant. Human learning is a good handmaid to religion, but let it keep its proper place. Avoid all personalities in your sermons, and when you would, reprove a sinner, pull down self-righteousness, expose a hypocrite or any other that is displeasing to God—search for such characters in His Word and show the danger of such—and conscience and the Holy Spirit will make the particular application. The same will hold as to mourners, the tempted, the backslider, and the believer. There is not a possible case for a man to be in but its parallel may be found in Scripture.

If you should be warmed with your subject, let your zeal be according to knowledge, and arise from the weight of your subject. Beware of passionate and angry expressions, for the wrath of man never did work the righteousness of God. In a word, when you are discharging the work of your ministry look upon yourself as an instrument, a mere voice, and be willing that others should consider you in the same manner. This will bring you into an habitual dependence upon Almighty God for His blessing, that He will give you success.

Let all you say in public be confirmed by a modest, pious, and humble deportment in life and conversation: and your people will love you, will pray for you, and profit under your ministry. May we and ours obtain the repentance of Peter, the faith of Paul, the love of John, and be kept humble at the foot of the Cross, till we are called to join the heavenly choir.—John Thornton, 1784.

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September, 1941

### **THE DIVINE AGENCY IN WAR.**

(Jeremiah 51:20)

George Lawson

War is one of the most frightful calamities which can overtake a nation: how dreadful then the misery and suffering entailed when *many* nations are involved therein. At such a time the belief of many in an over-ruling Providence is rudely shaken, for to them it appears that Satan, rather than the Lord God, is master of the situation and the author of their troubles. Even God's own people, unless they are firmly established in the Faith, find it difficult to stay their minds on the Ruler of the Universe, trusting implicitly in His wisdom and goodness. Questions will be raised that are not easily answered, doubts stirred up which cannot readily be stilled. It is therefore timely to ask, What is the relation of God to war? Is He but a far-distant Spectator, having no immediate connection? or is His agency directly involved? if so, to what extent? To speculate upon such a solemn matter would not only be useless, but impious—to the Word of Truth we must turn if we are to have right thoughts thereon, thoughts which honour and not dishonour the Most High.

We have been granted the loan of a small book published in 1810 which contains three sermons by George Lawson, minister of the Gospel, Selkirk, Scotland, in which he has most helpfully dealt with “The Divine Agency in War and Revolution.” They examine this subject in the light of Holy Writ and are the best treatment of the same which we have ever come across. We therefore propose to give our friends the benefit of these sermons. We shall not publish them at length, but summarize their contents, sticking close

to their substance, and even language, yet here and there adding some comments of our own. Though preached nearly one hundred and fifty years ago they are most pertinent to our own times, for they were delivered in the midst of the Napoleon wars, when the greater part of Europe was then convulsed and plunged into wretchedness and woe, in fact, conditions which obtained then supply not a few analogies with those existing now.

Those who read the histories of nations find many proofs that men are often more cruel to their fellows than lions and tigers. These ferocious animals kill their prey only to satisfy their own hunger, but men destroy their fellows to fulfil the lusts of ambition and avarice which can never be satiated. Lions and tigers may have killed thousands of human beings in the course of the centuries, but millions have been destroyed in the span of a few years by the restless wickedness of men who cared not what their fellow men suffered if they obtained the gratification of their unreasonable desires, which, when they were satisfied, were found to add nothing to their happiness, but rather to increase their misery.

Who can sufficiently deplore that depravity of human nature which has made men beasts of prey, or rather devils to one another, seeking whom they may devour? He who has read the history of any nation must be sensible, if he uses his understanding, that the accounts given us in the Holy Scriptures of the corruption of mankind are well confirmed by experience. But let us not think, my readers, that the same corrupt nature is not in ourselves which shows itself in the ravagers and destroyers of mankind; or that it does not operate in us because it is not manifested in the same outrageous manner against our fellow men. There is none among men that is righteous, none that seeks after God. Self-love has taken the throne of the heart of man, and when it is not under Divine restraint nor refused opportunities of discovering its horrible malignity, it spreads misery and ruin around it on every side.

But while we contemplate with grief and shame the works of men of the same corrupt natures with ourselves, we ought by no means to overlook the agency of Divine providence in all these occasions wherein they are actors. God is the supreme agent. All inferior agents are under His government and held by Him under such effectual control that they can do nothing without Him. In the most tremendous calamities which they inflict, they are the ministers of God's righteous providence. When kingdoms are destroyed, by whatsoever means, the agency of *God* is to be acknowledged in this work of judgment. This is plainly taught in, "Thou art *My battle-axe*, and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms" (Jer. 51:20). This was the text for each of Mr. Lawson's sermons, but before considering it more closely let us call attention to one or two other Scriptures, equally definite and striking.

In Jeremiah 25:9 we find Jehovah referring to Nebuchadnezzar as "My servant," just as He spoke of "My servant Moses" (Num. 12:7) and "David My servant" (Psa. 89:3). The king of Babylon was just as truly an instrument of the Divine will as were the Patriarchs—the one in punishing and destroying, the other in delivering and building up. "Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD . . . and they shall eat up thine harvest, and thy bread, which thy sons and thy daughters should eat: they shall eat up thy flocks and thine herds: they shall eat up thy vines and thy fig trees: they shall impoverish thy fenced cities, wherein thou trustedst, with the sword" (Jer. 5:15, 17). God brings judgment upon a nation as surely as He gives blessing, uproots as truly as He plants. "Lo, *I raise up* the Chaldeans, that

bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwelling-places that are not theirs: they are terrible and dreadful” (Hab. 1:6, 7): how clearly do those words reveal that even heathen nations are under God's control and used by Him when it serves His purpose. None who are conversant with the contents of Holy Writ and who bow to its authority can doubt for a moment that God uses one nation as His instrument for chastening another, even though afterwards He destroys the instrument itself.

“Thou art My battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (Jer. 51:20). The reference here is to Cyrus, but what is said of *that* mighty conqueror is equally true of all conquerors that ever lived or shall live on the earth. Shall there be evil in any city or kingdom, and the Lord hath not done it? (Amos 3:6). Conquerors reckon themselves almost gods upon the earth, but the axes and saws with which men cut and cleave wood might, with far better reason, exalt themselves to the rank of human creatures. None of them can do anything but what God's counsel determined before to be done by their hand—and therefore it is our bounden duty to give God the glory for all the good that is done by them, and to adore His awful providence in all the miseries which they inflict upon guilty kingdoms.

When God is pleased to bring about changes and revolutions in kingdoms, He ordinarily makes use of *men* for His instruments. Cyrus and his army were His battle-axe and His weapons of war for the destruction of Babylon. Alexander the great was His battle-axe for the destruction of that empire of Persia which Cyrus had raised upon the ruins of Babylon. The Romans were God's battle-axe and weapons of war for the subversion of those kingdoms into which the empire of Alexander was divided—as, we may add, they were His battle-axe in destroying Jerusalem: note well how in Matthew 22:7 it is expressly declared of the Romans, “He sent forth His armies and destroyed those murderers (of the Prophets and of His own Son) and burned their city.” Later, the Goths and Vandals were God's battle-axe for the subversion of the western part of the Roman empire, as He employed the Saracens and Turks to destroy the eastern part of it.

1. Let us now consider on what account conquerors of nations are called “God's battle-axes.” We read in Scripture of hail and snow laid up in His magazines which He has prepared for the day of war (Job 38:22, 23). By a like figure of speech these mighty men whom He employs in shaking nations and overturning kingdoms are compared to these terrible weapons which in ancient times were used for the destruction of mankind. God had *chosen* the instruments employed by Him for subverting kingdoms. Before the foundation of the world He decreed whatever has come to pass or *will* come to pass, and selected from the rest of His creatures the inferior agents by which all His counsels were to be accomplished. As Paul was separated from his mother's womb to bear the name of Christ before the Gentiles and to raise up many churches, so Cyrus was chosen to be the utter destroyer of Babylon and the repairer of the desolations of Sion. God said of him long before he came into the world, “he is *My shepherd*, and shall perform all My pleasure” (Isa. 44:28).

2. All *the talents* possessed by conquerors are the gifts of God. When we read the exploits of the champions of Israel in the days of David, we see how abundantly God bestowed on His favoured people those accomplishments by which many of them acquired immortal honour. It was He who taught David's hands to war (Psa. 18:33, 34), made his feet like hinds' feet and set him upon His high places. It was He

who girded David's illustrious heroes with strength, so the bows of steel were broken by their arms; lion-like men were destroyed with as much ease as if they had been little children, and whole troops were put to flight by the steady valour of single champions.

But are those accomplishments *from God* which are used for the service of the devil? Certainly, for the devil cannot put wisdom into the inward parts: he cannot inspire the hearts of men with unshaken fortitude to battle; good gifts may be applied to very bad purposes. The accomplishments of the destroyers of mankind are the gifts of God to them, not for their own benefit, but for the chastisement of guilty nations. If the plowman cannot manage his business successfully unless God instruct him (Isa. 28: 26, 27), it is impossible for the warrior to lay his plans and execute them with determined bravery amidst a thousand dangers and obstructions without receiving from on High a large portion of those intellectual endowments which are the glory of men when they are directed by benevolence, and their disgrace when they are made subservient to a selfish ambition. When Cyrus is called "the anointed of the Lord" (Isa. 45:1), we are taught not only that he was chosen to accomplish great works for God, but that he was qualified by the Spirit of God for doing them. Not only that wisdom by which some are furnished for usefulness in the Church, but all those qualities of mind by which any of the sons of men render themselves illustrious, come from the Spirit who is the Author of rational life as truly as of spiritual (see Exo. 28:3; 31:2, 3; Job 32:8).

3. By the Divine providence conquerors are *placed in those circumstance* which give them opportunities for performing those great works for which they have been renowned. Multitudes are compelled by necessity all their days to live in obscurity, whatever talents they may possess. If Cyrus had been the son of a peasant, all his great endowments might have been concealed from the world, or at least no mention made of them in history. Though the son of a petty king, he was the grandson and the nephew of mighty monarchs of the Medes, and matters were so arranged by Divine providence that, having received the excellent education which the Persians in that age bestowed upon their children he obtained that place in the armies and councils of his uncle Darius which furnished him with opportunities to exalt his country above the other nations, to destroy his enemies, and in destroying them to subvert that mighty empire of Babylon, by which the people of the Lord had been so cruelly oppressed.

But although men should be born in a low station, if God has great works to be performed by them, He knows how to raise them from obscurity and to extend their sphere of usefulness or of mischief. For many generations past the affairs of Europe have been managed with such a steady policy that there seemed to be no reason for dreading any very remarkable reverse in the fate of nations. But of late such changes have taken place that new and striking lessons have been given to all mankind of the instability of all things under the sun and of the inefficacy of human wisdom to secure the thrones of those who derive their pedigree from a long list of royal ancestors, or to prevent the children of the lowest of their subjects from rising up to seize their envied power. "The Lord casts down the mighty and raises the poor out of the dust that he may inherit the throne of glory."

The means by which men raise themselves to stations of grandeur are often very bad. Justice and mercy are trampled under foot by men who aspire to stations to which they were not born. But without God these measures which are so greatly detested by Him would not be successful. It is the devil who prompts men

to make use of them: but he is a liar when he says that he gives the kingdoms of the world to whomsoever he will. God never committed the disposal of kingdoms to His great adversary. But He sometimes shines upon the counsels of the wicked, to place them in a position to perform services to Himself, which they are better qualified to perform than His own faithful people. Agrippian, the mother of that monster Nero, procured the imperial crown for him by poisoning her husband Claudius, and Nero secured it to himself by the murder of his adopted brother, the son of Claudius. Yet concerning that prince, and those magistrates who held their place under him, it could be said with truth, “there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God” (Rom. 13:1).

4. God directs all *the enterprises* of the conquerors of the world. He presides in their councils; He regulates their decisions; He determines against what nations they shall lead forth their armies to war. It is, indeed, too high for us to understand *how* God regulates the councils of wicked men and how He bends their minds to a compliance with His decrees in those actions wherein the depravity of their hearts operates with a force that carries them beyond all bounds; but if it be wondrous in our eyes, should it be wondrous in the eyes of God also? Let us remember that our consolation and joy of faith depends on this truth, that no man can say and it comes to pass, when the Lord commands it not. If any man or devil were left to do one thing independently of the Divine providence, the foundation of our confidence in God would be subverted, and what could the righteous do? But Jehovah is the everlasting King—He fashions men's hearts—and while they are executing their own wills they are effectually executing the will of God.

Could any counsels be more unjust and impious than those of him which boasted, “Shall I not as I have done to Samaria and her idols, so do to Jerusalem and her idols?” (Isa. 10:11). Yet he spoke the truth, although he meant to lie, when he said, “The Lord said to me, Go up against this land and destroy it” (2 Kings 18:25). Hear what God Himself says concerning him, “O Assyrian, the rod of Mine anger, and the staff in their hand is Mine indignation. I will *send him* against a hypocritical nation and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets. *Howbeit he meaneth not so*, neither doth his heart think so” (Isa. 10:5-7).

When Nebuchadnezzar was ravaging the world, he held the nations in perpetual alarms. When he made an end of one conquest, it was the subject of anxious inquiry what nations should next be attacked by him. It was at one time a question whether he should lead his terrible armies against the children of Ammon or against Jerusalem. The oppressor of the nations was for some time himself undetermined and used divinations to decide the business. He made his arrows bright: he consulted with images: he looked in the liver. At his right hand were the divinations for Jerusalem, to appoint captains to open the mouths in the slaughter. But the matter had long before been determined in the counsels of *God*, who revealed His purpose through the Prophet: see Ezekiel 21:18-24.

5. All *the success* of conquerors is from God. We are often astonished at the rapidity of their progress. Some of them have achieved conquests in the space of a few weeks that which other famous leaders would have deemed it glorious to have achieved in a lifetime. Cyrus was justly accounted one of the most renowned leaders in the ancient world yet his victories are expressly attributed in Scripture to the providence of God. “He will do his pleasure on Babylon and his arm shall be on the Chaldeans. I, even I, have spoken, yea, I have called him: I have brought him, and he shall make his way prosperous” (Isa.

48:14, 15). When Nebuchadnezzar like a destroying lion laid the countries of the east desolate, the Lord put courage into the hearts of his soldiers, directed their operations and removed every obstacle out of their way—that He might accomplish His Word: see Ezekiel 30:22-26.

We have sometimes been astonished at the madness which seemed to possess the hearts of kings and their counselors when their dearest interests urgently demanded the exertion of all the wisdom that could be found within their kingdoms. But let it be solemnly remembered that it is often God's way to blind those whom He intends to destroy. “Shall I not in that day (of her calamity) even destroy the wise men out of Edom?” (Oba. 8)! So, too, we have been amazed at armies famous in battle who could maintain their ground and sometimes win notable victories, against more than double their number, yet a few years after turn back in battle when there are no such odds against them. God, to accomplish His purpose, weakened their courage and withered their strength: “Now have I brought it to pass that thou shouldest be to lay waste defenced cities into ruinous heaps. *Therefore* their inhabitants were of small power, they were *dismayed* and confounded” (Isa. 37:26, 27).

6. All *the events* brought about by conquerors are consequently works of Divine providence. Mighty changes are accomplished by those who subvert kingdoms and destroy nations. But no change can be produced, great or small, by any power on earth which is not to be ascribed to the Most High who rules in the cabinets of kings, the tumults of the people, the fury of battle, as truly as in the raging of the sea. The Lord speaks of four sore judgments by which He punishes guilty nations: the sword, famine, pestilence, and beasts of the earth (Ezek. 14). He executes these judgments by different means but they are all equally the work of His hands. His agency ought to be acknowledged no less in what is done by wicked men than by what is accomplished by withholding rain. The wars by which the kings of Canaan were rooted out were as truly from God as the fire and brimstone which destroyed Sodom. The sword of Joshua was the sword of Jehovah (Josh. 10:42).—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1941

### THE DESTRUCTION OF TYRE.

In the destruction of the cities and nations denounced by prophecy we are not merely to view the fulfillment of prediction, but we are to consider that the thing predicted is to be effected by the Lord, so that the destruction is *the Lord's* work. "He stretched out His hand over the sea, He shook the kingdoms: the Lord hath given a commandment against the merchant city to destroy the strongholds thereof" (Isa. 23:11). God does the thing: man does it. In doing the work of the Lord man acts *freely*, and is justly accountable for doing what is directly appointed for him to do. Philosophy cannot plumb this ocean by its line; philosophy, therefore, denies what it cannot comprehend. But does she show wisdom in this? No—she manifests her folly. The amount of her unbelief is this: "There is nothing in the ways of the Almighty but what I am able to comprehend." Can there be a purer specimen of atheism and madness?

In the accomplishment of the threatenings against the nations, we are also to consider that God usually works in the way of providence. He works effectually but in such a manner that His hand is not generally seen. The wisdom of this world sees nothing but the agency of man. Here is the great wisdom of God: He manifests Himself in His works of providence; yet, as in the works of creation, He is not seen.—Alexander Carson, 1854.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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October, 1941

### **THE DIVINE AGENCY IN WAR.**

(Jeremiah 51:20)

George Lawson

Before passing on to the next branch of our subject, let us offer some practical reflections on what has been before us last month. 1. We ought to form just notions of the universal extent of the Divine Providence, particularly remembering that the actions of men are as truly and fully under the control of the Divine government as the motions of the heavenly bodies. Think not that the Divine power rules only those creatures which lack life and reason: His kingdom rules over men and devils as well as over fire and wing and stormy vapours. Job lost as much by Sabean and Chaldean spoilers as he did by “the fire of God” and the “great wind,” yet he perceived the hand of God in the one as much as in the other, saying, “The LORD gave and the LORD (not the Sabeans) hath taken away: blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21).

2. We must give unto God the glory of His works, even of those which he performs by the hands of His creatures. He is to be revered and adored in all the works of His hands. He is glorious in His works of Providence as well as in His works of creation. He made all things “good” when he made the world, and He does all things “well” in the government of it. He is glorious in what He does by the hands of wicked men as well as what He does by the hands of His saints. In His acts of vengeance as well as in His works of grace He is glorious. The work of the Lord is always glorious and honourable, even when He makes use of instruments for accomplishing them that are vile and accursed. “O LORD, Thou art my God; I will exalt

Thee, I will praise Thy name; for Thou hast done wonderful things; Thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For *Thou* hast made of a city an heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. *Therefore* shall the strong people *glorify Thee*, the city of the terrible nations shall fear Thee” (Isa. 25:1-3).

How glorious is that power which keeps the devils of Hell, and those fierce tyrants who are their visible images on earth, under such powerful restraint that they can do nothing less or more than He pleases, and are still accomplishing His holy purpose when they think they are only performing what *they* please and what appears to them most conducive to the fulfillment of their own ambitions! How wonderful is that God in counsels who makes the wrath of men to praise Him: who brings glory to His name and happiness to them that love Him out of those evils which threatened destruction to His kingdom on earth—who combines events of the most contrary tendency as means for effectuating the same gracious end! When God's people were carried to Babylon, they were commanded to pray for the peace of that city, for in her peace they were to have peace: yet when that city was destroyed, they found peace and joy in her ruins.

The people of God are often unable to see the glory of that work which He performs by the hands of those men whom He employs as instruments of His wrath. They are tempted to think that the Lord has utterly forgotten Zion, or that He has forsaken the earth, and leaves it to be turned upside down by the caprice of those mighty oppressors whom He suffers to do according to their will. But let it not be forgotten we must walk by faith and not by sight. It is but a little portion of the ways of God that we can understand. Those events which appear to us most dark and gloomy are essential parts of a plan of conduct which will appear glorious and excellent when it is developed in its full extent. Let us also remember that when clouds and darkness are about the Lord God, righteousness and judgment are still the habitation of His throne.

3. Herein we see in what estimation those heroes are to be held who have triumphed by the use of force and been accorded the chief places of honour in history. They are furnished with brilliant talents by the great Dispenser of gifts to men. They have nothing but what they have received, and nothing but what is always under the control of the Giver. Their knowledge, their valour, their enterprising spirit, their presence of mind in danger and death, their dexterity in finding resources in emergencies, which have sunk other men into despondency, may deserve high admiration. Let their endowments and exploits have their share of praise, but let us not lose sight of the Giver and Director of those endowments. It was justly observed even by a heathen philosopher that such men as Alexander the Great deserve only such admiration as we would bestow on a destructive tempest or earthquake.

We are too ready to give some portion of that honour and fear to great men which ought to be reserved sacred to the Most High. Give fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour is due—but give them not that honour and fear which belongs only to the King of kings. Nebuchadnezzar once thought that there was not a God that could deliver out of his hand: that he could kill or save alive whom he pleased, without control from any higher power. But bitter experience forced him to confess that every man at his best estate was altogether vanity, and that all the inhabitants of the earth were but like grasshoppers before Him who does according to His will in the armies of Heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth.

Shall we say, then, that the actions of men are not their own, that they are no more than machines in the

hands of a superior agent? Far be it from us to deny that men are rational agents, and that they are entitled to praise or blame for what they do. God has given different natures to different creatures, but He has not put it into the power of any of them to do any thing without Himself. Consider what God said to the proud Assyrian monarch who boasted of his uncontrollable power over the nations to rob and plunder and destroy at his pleasure. God heard with indignation and contempt his insolent boasts, and let him know that he was no more in the hands of his Maker than an axe or saw was in the hand of a carpenter. See Isaiah 10:13-15.

The guilt of any sin is not in the least degree lessened by the agency of the Divine Providence in directing and overruling it to serve the purpose of the Divine wisdom. Those who crucified the Lord of Glory did nothing but what God had foretold by the mouth of His holy Prophets, nothing but what God saw expedient to be done for the accomplishment of our salvation. The murderers of Jesus Christ had no intention to execute the will of God; they rejected His counsel against themselves. They were under no compulsion but fulfilled the desires of their own hearts, Yet they did nothing but what God's hand and counsel determined before to be done: and by doing it, they justly brought upon themselves the most fearful curses denounced against the enemies of God in the volume of inspiration.

4. The consideration of this truth should teach us how to regulate our thoughts and affections under all the awful events that take place in the world. The men who bring them to pass are the instruments of that Providence to which all reverence and praise is ever due, and they have done nothing which will not be overruled by Him to the accomplishment of His own purposes. We repeat that it is indeed true that the guilt of wicked men is not in any degree lessened by the use which God makes of them, and therefore are they the just objects of abhorrence. It is likewise true that the changes wrought by them may be attended with great misery to nations, to our nation perhaps, and to ourselves, amongst others who are affected by them. But the Lord is righteous in all the evil things that come upon us and upon our fellow men. We are sinners, as well as those by whom God takes vengeance of our sins.

Why then should we indulge our angry passions without restraint? Ought we not rather to humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, to learn righteousness from the Divine judgments? Whatever loss we sustain in our accommodations and comforts, if we behave dutifully to God and with a right temper towards the men who are the instruments of our correction, the advantage derived from the most awful events will greatly counterbalance the loss. Give no place to desponding fears, either on your own account or on account of the interests of Christ's Church. Let the children of God remember that He is their heavenly Father who loves them, whose tender mercies infinitely exceed the compassions of any earthly parents toward their children, and that His power is equal to His grace. The mightiest of your enemies are in His hand, and they can do you no more harm than He sees necessary for your good. When God sent the Assyrians against the Jews, fearfulness justly surprised the hypocrites of Zion; but remember what He said to the faithful remnant of that day: see Isaiah 10:24, 25.

If bad men have all their power from God, and all their movements are directed and overruled to the accomplishment of His pleasure, they shall do no permanent injury to any who are under His protection. "Behold, I have created the smith that bloweth the coals in the fire, and that bringeth forth an instrument for his work, and I have created the waster to destroy. No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper:

and every tongue that shall rise against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord, and their righteousness is of Me, saith the LORD” (Isa. 54:16, 17). He will not suffer any of those for whom Christ died to perish by the hand of those instruments whom He employs to execute His displeasure on a generation of His wrath. They may suffer a while, but their sufferings will be salutary to their souls. It may be they shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. Most certainly they shall be safe from the worst of evils: see Romans 8:28.

When a pestilence rages in a country, what value would be set on a medicine found to be an effectual antidote against infection! A still higher value would be put on a medicine which was found to be not only an effectual preservative of life, but also a sure means of rendering the distemper so beneficial to the body of the patient that he would never again be exposed to danger from any contagious disease. Vital godliness and personal piety is a medicine of such virtue to the soul. All evil things are turned by it into good by their consequences. Unto the upright there arises light out of darkness, and sorrow is turned into joy through their faith, and through the supplies of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

Let us read with the text (Jer. 51:20) the words that go before it. “The portion of Jacob is not like them (the idols of the nations); for He is the Former of all things, and Israel is the rod of His inheritance: the LORD of hosts is His name.” He it is who says to the conqueror of our text, “thou art My battle-axe and My weapons of war.” Nor let it be forgotten by us that unto Him who loved us and gave Himself for us is “committed all judgment.” The keys of the invisible world and of death are in our Saviour's hands, and He will not suffer any of the enemies of mankind to live any longer than He pleases. They cannot move an arm without Him. They cannot, without Him, form a single thought, for “the government (of the universe) is upon *His* shoulder.” He is not only the Head of the body which is His church, but he is given to be the Head over all things *to* the Church.

Having spoken of conquerors in war as God's battle-axes, let us now consider *the use* which He makes of them. With them He “breaks in pieces the nations, and with them He destroys kingdoms.” In these words we are taught: 1. That nations and kingdoms are liable to destruction as well as individuals. We are, too, ready to think that the nations and kingdoms to which we belong must abide as long as the earth. But what has become of the most ancient kingdoms, which were once the terror of the mighty? The beginning of the kingdom of Nimrod, that mighty hunter before the Lord, was Babel; but not only was his kingdom more than once brought low, but it has since been utterly destroyed. “For I will rise up against them, saith the LORD of hosts, and cut off from Babylon the name and remnant, and son and nephew, saith the LORD. I will also make it a possession for the bittern, and pools of water: and I will sweep it with the besom of destruction, saith the LORD of hosts. The LORD of hosts hath sworn, saying, Surely as I have thought, so shall it come to pass” (Isa. 14:22-24).

We are disposed to think if a kingdom has long continued in its strength, that it must be eternal in its duration. Egypt was a famous kingdom in ancient times, but it is now one of the least of kingdoms. Ezekiel puts them in mind (chap. 32) of many famous nations who had once been the terror of the mighty, but had gone down to the sides of the pit, with all their multitudes. And what reason have we to think that kingdoms and nations are now more secure? Great discoveries have indeed been made in modern times for the benefit of mankind, but not until physicians find an antidote against death that men may never see

corruption, shall we have any hope that politicians (the physicians of the State) will discover some preventative of that perpetual tendency to dissolution, by which empires like individuals are brought to their final period.

It is melancholy to consider that not only our own bodies are mortal, but the nation to which we belong is liable to destruction. But melancholy considerations are often useful. When we consider the frailty of our own bodies, we see the necessity of avoiding everything that may hasten an event which we wish to have retarded. And when we consider the vicissitudes incident to nations, we see powerful reasons to avoid everything that may bring upon us the guilt of hastening the ruin of our country. Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is the reproach of any people. The righteous therefore are the strength and glory of a land. Sinners, especially those who will not be reclaimed by the admonitions of the Word and Providence of God, and most of all those who by their example and influence make many others to sin with them, are its worst enemies.

2. Whatever be the means of the destruction of a nation, God is fit Author of it. Since no man can die till the day appointed by the counsels of God, no nation can be destroyed or revolutionized without Him. However mighty our enemies may be, however well laid their plans for our ruin, and however ably those plans are executed, we are safe IF our ways please the Lord. But we entertain false notions of God if we think that because He delights in mercy He will not punish guilty nations as well as sinning individuals. It is the height of absurdity to suppose that any kingdom can perish or meet with any calamity in opposition to the Divine counsels concerning them. It would be the destruction of all our comfort, of all our hope in God, if there could be evil in a city which the Lord has not done. If any creature has power to act independently of God, we are not safe under His protection.

But can a merciful and gracious God take pleasure in pulling down, in plucking up and destroying? Is it good to Him that He should oppress, that He should destroy nations at once, that He should give success to the counsels of those savages who delight in slaughter? It is vain for us to shut our eyes against plain facts. It is certain that many kingdoms have been overthrown; and it is equally certain that such tremendous events could not take place in the world without the agency of Divine Providence—unless that blasphemous doctrine were true that the Lord has forsaken the earth, that He sits on His throne a careless spectator of the miseries of His poor creatures—and that he will suffer His well-laid plans for the welfare of mankind to be frustrated by the fury of destroyers.

Dreadful as the convulsions of nations and the overturning of thrones are, God knows how to make them subservient to His purpose. The Lord is the King of nations, and He governs in wisdom and righteousness. The supreme magistrate of a nation would but ill perform his duty if he did not cause his laws to be respected by the punishment of evil-doers, and it well becomes Him who reigns over *all kings and their kingdoms* to show forth His displeasure against guilty nations, especially when they refuse to be reclaimed, by inflicting deserved punishment upon them. There are some who will not allow that God punishes nations in any other way than by leaving them to suffer the natural and unavoidable consequences of their own behaviour. But have not the natural consequences of virtue and vice been annexed to them by the same Providence that has established the ordinances of Heaven and earth? The wrath of God is seen in those who indulge licentious passions when their flesh is consumed and their names abhorred.

Yet it is plain that the vices of a nation are not the sole cause of its ruin. It may long exist in an enfeebled state under the universal prevalence of vice, although its glory is departed, if no foreign enemies precipitate its destruction—but when one nation brings misery and ruin upon another, the righteousness of God is to be acknowledged in the awful event. We ought indeed to be very cautious in assigning reasons why God brings destruction either upon individuals or nations. We must not be wise above what is written; but it is plainly revealed in Scripture that God inflicts His judgments upon nations on account *of their sins*. Read through Ezekiel 23, where the people of Judah are viewed under the emblem of the harlot Aholibah, and note especially verses 30, 31. Note, too, how in Jeremiah 18:7, 8 sentence of destruction may be averted by true national repentance: as was the case with Nineveh.—George Lawson.

N.B. The careful reader will observe how wisely and well Mr. Lawson preserved the *balance* between God's sovereignty and God's righteousness. The Most High does as He pleases, always as He pleases, and gives no account of His matters unto us. Nevertheless, He does not act capriciously, without good reason. While He goes not outside of Himself for the *motives* of His actions, working all things after the pleasure of His own imperial will, yet this does not mean He takes no knowledge of human actions or does not *justly* apportion both rewards and punishments to individuals and nations alike. When His judgments fall upon us, whatever form they take, it is because our sins have called loudly for Him to vindicate His honour and enforce the penalty of His Law. Had we heeded His warnings, responded to His exhortations, and altered our evil ways, His wrath had been *averted*—“O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isa. 48:18). Even when God's judgments are upon us, it is not too late to seek a moderation of them. See Psalm 81:13, 14. But if His people refuse, then the nation must drain the cup of His anger.—A.W.P.

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November, 1941

### **GOD'S AGENCY IN WAR.**

Does God punish nations for their wickedness under the Christian dispensation as He did during Old Testament times? If He did not we should have to discontinue the use of many of the Psalms in the praise of God. David often speaks of the righteousness of God's judgment against the nations, and if it were a glorious expression of the Divine justice in the days of old to punish guilty nations, why is it to be thought that He is now weary of exhibiting such specimens of the excellency of His administration? It is still true that the Lord of hosts will be exalted in judgment and that His holiness will be sanctified in righteousness. The kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ had not been long established in the world before a wrath came upon Judah to the uttermost, because that people had killed Jesus the Saviour, and slain the Prophets and Apostles whom He sent unto them (Matt. 22:7; 1 Thess. 2:16).

The book of the Revelation gives us a concise view of the series of Divine administration in the world under seven seals, seven vials, and seven trumpets—and it is plain that the calamities predicted under each were judgments to be inflicted upon the peoples for their iniquities. Under the fifth seal we find a complaint presented before God by the souls of them that were slain for His Word and for the testimony of Jesus. Under the sixth seal we find a prediction of tremendous revolutions announced against their persecutors. Under the trumpets awful judgments were inflicted on the nations for sins that are expressly named. After the sounding of the sixth trumpet it is said that the men which were not killed by these plagues, “yet repented not of the works of their hands, that they should not worship devils, the idols of gold and silver,” etc. (Rev. 9:20, 21). When the third vial was poured out and the fountain of water became

blood, John heard a voice saying, “Lord God Almighty, true and righteous are Thy judgments” (16:7). So, too, mystical Babylon is to be destroyed because she is “the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth.”

But it may be objected: Is it not inconsistent with that humility which becomes such short-sighted creatures as we are to ascribe the particular transgressions which have kindled the Divine displeasure against those nations which are ruined by the agents of His providence? It would certainly be inconsistent with that reverence which we owe to God and that charity we owe to our fellow creatures to assign reasons for their calamities, when we are not authorized by the Word of God to do it. But the Scriptures plainly tell us what those offenses are which ordinarily bring down the displeasure of God on guilty nations, and they require us to give Him the glory due unto His works by observing and acknowledging His righteousness. Wise men who contemplate the works of nature inquire why the great Creator has given to various creatures different powers, propensities, and instincts. But how would they understand the wisdom and goodness of their Maker if they should, through an affected humility, disclaim all knowledge of His intentions in dispensing His gifts so variously? And how can we make that improvement of the works of the King of nations if we shut our eyes against that light by which we might judge of the reasons of His conduct?

The Scriptures tell us what those crimes were for which God spread desolation and misery over many countries in ancient times. If we knew that the same or the like crimes abounded in those countries which have recently been the theater of the judgments of Heaven, ought we not to be impressed with a new sense of that holiness which appears in the ways of the Lord and to learn righteousness when His judgments are on the earth? Our Lord censured those who thought that the men on whom the tower of Siloam fell were greater sinners than others in Jerusalem. And we, too, would deserve severe censure if we should pretend to judge of the degree of criminality chargeable on any nation from the calamities which have befallen it. Those are not always the most wicked nations that are first or that are most awfully punished. The Chaldeans were the worst of the heathens, and yet they were the ministers of Divine Providence in the punishment of all the surrounding nations (Ezek. 7; Jer. 25).

The Sovereign Ruler of the earth gives no account of His matters, and we can claim no right to call Him to account. He has reasons worthy of Himself for His conduct when He extends His longsuffering to some persons or nations to a greater degree than He does to others less wicked. But while we give Him the glory of His sovereignty, we ought not to hide our eyes from the plain proofs which He is pleased to give us of His hatred of sin. The old lying Prophet who deceived the man of God of Judah and tempted him to eat bread when God had forbidden him to was undoubtedly a greater sinner than the Prophet whom he deceived, yet the longsuffering of God to that offender should not hinder us from admiring His wisdom and justice in punishing a good Prophet for his disobedience.

Many nations have been in our day (1810) brought very low. Several thrones have been subverted (by Napoleon). It is our duty to hear the voice of God in such tremendous dispensations calling upon us to learn righteousness from His judgments which are abroad in the earth. But how can we learn righteousness from them if we affect to be ignorant of a truth so often taught in the Bible—that fat lands are turned into barrenness and countries covered with desolation for the iniquities of those who dwell in them (Psa. 107;

Amos 9). Far be from us to infer from the miseries of any nations the sins for which they are punished. This would be to imitate the reprobated conduct of Job's friends, who judged him to be a hypocrite and atheist because he suffered the most grievous afflictions from the Providence of God. But when we know that nations have greatly sinned against God, and that they have greatly suffered, we may justly infer that their sins were the cause of their sufferings. God's ways, like Himself, change not.

The New Testament Prophet speaks of vials full of the last Judgment to be poured out upon the Beast and his worshippers. When those vials are poured forth, praise is given to God by those who had escaped from infection: “great and marvelous are Thy works Lord God Almighty: just and true are Thy ways, Thou King of saints, Who would not fear Thee, O Lord, and glorify Thy name, for Thou only art holy for Thy judgments are made manifest” (Rev. 15:3, 4). Are we not taught in those words that the ground of God's quarrel with the Popish nations, when they shall be visited with His judgments, is to be made so manifest as to afford just cause for praise! Some may object, If by the worshippers of the Beast are meant Romanists, they cannot deserve grievous judgments for holding fast a religion which they had been taught by their fathers and which they sincerely believe is well-pleasing to God. Answer: the Israelites who revolted under Jeroboam believed the worship of idols was acceptable to the Lord, yet the error of their judgment did not shelter them from His vengeance.

The perversion of religion in Israel was accompanied by many other vices which were so many causes of God's wrath against them. And are not the errors of Popery equally inimical to good morals? It is a pernicious deceit to suppose it is of no great consequence what men believe if their morals are good. Our faith ought to be pure as well as our morals, and corruptions in faith never fail to have an immoral tendency. Woe be unto us, who abhor the errors of Popish nations, and yet are perhaps as bad in many respects as they are, and in some respects worse. Our sins are greatly aggravated by the superior advantages that we enjoy. We have been wonderfully preserved from threatened judgments—let us not be high-minded, but fear. God does what He pleases but His justice as well as His mercy endures forever.

There are other reasons beside the punishing of guilty nations for which God makes use of His battle-axe and weapons of war, in the destructive work for which they are fitted. By the revolutions accomplished in the world He gives striking manifestations to mankind of the vanity and instability of all earthly things, and of the infinite difference between those glories of the world which so much dazzle the eyes of beholders, and the glory of His own eternal throne. We walk too much by sight, and not by faith. When we see men elevated to uncommon heights of power we almost think they are immortal. When we behold cities enriched by commerce or the spoils of enemies, surrounded with strong fortifications and defended by mighty armies, we almost think they are eternal cities, as Babylon and Rome were once thought to be by their inhabitants, and perhaps by their enemies, too. When a kingdom has stood long in its strength we are ready to dream that such kingdoms are everlasting.

Thus we are tempted to give those honours to men and sublunary things which are due only to Him who lives forever and ever. By the fall of mighty kingdoms and the subversion of thrones, we are made not only to see but feel the folly of trusting in princes, of bestowing excessive admiration on earthly grandeur, and of looking more at things seen and temporal than those which are eternal. When the day of the Lord is upon the cedars of Lebanon, the oaks of Bashan and the ships of Tarshith, His intention is that the things

which are great and high in the eyes of short-sighted men may be brought low, that the Lord alone may be exalted. Thus when the Prophet predicted the destruction of the glorious city of Tyre—the London of those days—he assigned this reason for God's awful purpose against that city: “The LORD of hosts hath purposed it to stain the pride of all glory to bring into contempt all the honorable of the earth” (Isa. 23:9).

We ought certainly to mourn when God punishes guilty nations for the misery of our fellow creatures and for the indications which He gives us of His displeasure against them. But if we believe the world is governed by the providence of Him who sees what is past and to come at one glance, we ought not to confine our views of the works of God to their present appearance but to remember that what He is now doing tends to something else, which in His time He will show who is the blessed and only Potentate, and that in His whole administration He keeps in view ends worthy of His wisdom and grace. Generations may indeed pass away one after another before those glorious results appear to men which are well known beforehand to the all-seeing Eye. We ought to satisfy ourselves with the well-grounded assurance that all the glorious things which are spoken of the City of our God shall be fulfilled, that not one good thing said or her shall fail. He will bring light out of darkness and life out of death.

Perhaps we are too dim-sighted to see how those revolutions which bring so much misery and desolation can contribute to the good of mankind in their remoter consequences. We can however see how the prosperity of nations only too often tends to the increase of vice by giving opportunities to men to gratify their lusts. In such cases sore calamities are necessary for checking the progress of wickedness and *forcing them*, if they will not be virtuous, to set at least some bounds to their vices. History shows how the power of kings has often been employed to obstruct the progress of the Gospel, and therefore the destruction of their powers makes a way for the free course of the Lord's Word. Former revolutions have been made instrumental in the diffusion of the knowledge of Christ in ways that no human sagacity could have foreseen or conjectured. When the mystery of God is finished we shall see more clearly how He has brought a clean thing out of an unclean.

Another thing taught by our text (Jer. 51:20) is that when God is pleased to bring about awful revolutions in kingdoms He ordinarily makes use of *men* for His instruments. By so doing He shows forth His glory as the universal Lord, who rules not only in the raging of the sea but in the tumults of the people. It is His glory to make use of wicked dispositions and the unholy works of the worst of men for the accomplishment of His purpose. He makes the wrath and pride of man to praise Him. The robber, the murderer, the destroyer of nations are His servants. While they are, to the utmost of their power, doing the work of His great enemy, yet they are accomplishing His holy counsels. It is very wonderful in our eyes that the will of God should be fulfilled even by His greatest enemies: thereby He magnifies His righteousness as the Governor of the world, not suffering wickedness either in individuals or nations to pass unpunished.

But what is most astonishing in this view of the Divine Providence is that even God's works *of grace* are carried on, not only in defiance of all the opposition that is made to them, but *by means of* the worst actions of wicked men and devils. Nebuchadnezzar, by the revolutions which he accomplished in many countries, prepared the way for the diffusion of the Gospel when it should be preached to the Gentiles. He scattered the Jews, the only nation that knew the true God, many of whom never returned to their own

land. Thereby the Gentiles in many lands had some seeds of true religion scattered among them, which were to bring forth an abundant increase in days to come. It might easily be shown that all the great revolutions of the past contributed their part to the happy success of the Gospel in later times, and we have no reason to doubt that the present shaking of nations will have like consequences, although we cannot name the time or the manner in which the Lord will finish His “strange work” in righteousness and mercy.

The *variety* of God's works is no inconsiderable part of their glory. David praises Him in strains of rapture for the endless variety of His works of nature. He is no less worthy of praise for the wonderful variety of His works in the moral government of the world. It will at least be clearly seen that both when He is pleased to destroy nations by His own immediate agency (as at the Flood) or by employing human instruments, He acts in a manner most conducive to the fulfillment of His purposes. If He had punished all those guilty nations that had made themselves obnoxious to His justice by fire from Heaven, the history of mankind must have been completely different from what it is, and many works had been left undone which are the objects of high praise in the Psalms and in the prophetic writings of the Old and New Testaments.

Let us now draw some practical reflections from our text. 1. We learn one great advantage to be derived from history. When we survey the works of nature we lose the chief part of the pleasure and advantage which we might derive from the view if we forget they are the works of God. Truly the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun, but this pleasure is greatly heightened and turned to devotion when we hear the voice of the heavens declaring the glory of God and the firmament showing His handiwork. So, too, we deprive ourselves of the richest advantage which history affords if we do not remember that the events which it records are the wondrous works of Him who is perfect in wisdom.

We are rightly saddened when we read of the fall of mighty empires and the carnage which has often been spread by the sword of the warrior. But we should remember that the sword of war is the sword of the Lord: that He mustereth the hosts of battle—that when mighty conquerors go forth they are the instruments of His Providence for accomplishing those overturnings which for wise ends He determined before any of us were born. With the same disposition we should read or hear the accounts which we receive daily of those events which are now happening in the world. Let us not forget that all men and their actions are under the superintendence of One who never errs. “I make peace, and create evil: I the Lord do all these things” (Isa. 45:7). If we hear of awful events we ought to admire that Providence which will bring order out of confusion and make darkness light to them that love Him.

There were heretics of old who confessed that all rational creatures were made by God but vile and noxious ones were made by the Devil. You are perhaps amazed that such foolish notions should enter the minds of men, but is it not equally unreasonable to suppose that the Providence of God is active only in the good and not in the wicked actions of men, that our blessings come from Him, but our calamities proceed from no higher course than some principle of evil? It is exceedingly dishonouring of God to suppose that any sin can be committed without His permission or any calamity befall men or nations that was not appointed for them in His eternal purpose.

2. Give unto God the glory of the awful dispensations of His Providence towards sinful nations. In Psalms

50, 105, 106, 135 we find praise is given to God for His judgments upon guilty people which shows that there is a Divine excellency in such works, which excellency we are to gladly acknowledge. The entire book of Ecclesiastes is devoted unto an exposure of the vanities and vexations which cleave to every earthly enjoyment. In the Lamentations God's people are taught to consider their distresses as a chastisement from the Almighty. Behold the desolations which He has wrought in the earth, and know that He is a just God as well as a Saviour. Though slow to anger, He is great in power and will not at all acquit the wicked. When you see the desolation He has wrought in the earth be still and know that He is God. He will be exalted among the nations.

While we give Him glory as the God to whom vengeance belongs, let us not forget that *mercy* which He remembers in the midst of wrath. There is mercy to mankind even in those terrible calamities which bear hardest on our spirits when worse evils are prevented thereby and when we have reason to believe that good will result from them. The casting away of the Jews has brought salvation unto the Gentiles (Rom. 11:11). What would have been the consequence if God had suffered wicked nations to walk age after age in their own ways without sending some of His terrible judgments to check the progress of sin? The world would scarcely have been habitable through that excessive wickedness which would have overspread the nations. If men are not generally reformed by the judgments of God, they are at least incapacitated to be so wicked as they might otherwise be. What would be the state of any nation if there were no magistrates to punish crime? And what would the world become if the King of nations suffered their wickedness always to remain unpunished? Admire, then, the wisdom of Him who brings good out of evil.—G. Lawson.

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November, 1941

### **SPIRITUAL CONTENTMENT.**

Yours I received, and return many thanks to you for your kindness and prayers. I am blind, but bless the Lord, I am content. All that He doth is wise and just—all that comes in His will is welcome. His choice is better than mine. Eyes might have blinded, but blindness shall enlighten me. God hath not cast me off, but called me aside into the invisible world. There Jesus Christ is the only sun. Mercy is a sea of infinite sweetness for faith to bathe in. The promises are as green pastures of comfort: God Himself is the dew that makes a spring of graces in the heart. Heavenly truths are the firmament over our heads. The pure air is the Holy Spirit breathing in saints and ordinances. In this world the blind have a prospect, and may see the land afar off, which lieth beyond the line of time in another world. I may say it is good being here: I cannot see outward things, but the new creature is a better sight than all the world. I cannot read the letters in the Bible, but I have the quickening Spirit. It is enough.

The veil is upon my eyes, but my work is to rend off the veil of time from my heart, and look into eternity; to put back all creatures, and to have all in God, eyes and all; and this is the greatest possession. If I have all things in themselves, I have them but in a finite sphere; but if I have them all in God, I have them eminently, and in a kind of infinity. In waiting, I wait upon the Lord, till He incline and give me eagles' wings of faith and love, to soar up to Him. Near enough to Him I cannot be. O that I were unearthed and unselfed, that my soul might be in perpetual ascensions to Him, my love going out in raptures after Him! O for the circumcision of the heart! If the film were off mine eyes, I should see the outward world; but if the flesh were *off my heart*, I should love the blessed God, which is infinitely better.—E. Polhill, after he

was blinded.

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December, 1941

### **WAR**

Jeremiah 51:20

George Lawson

3. The glory of the Divine sovereignty ought likewise to be acknowledged in the destruction of kingdoms and desolation of countries. If God should be pleased to inflict His tremendous judgments upon all sinning nations, the sons of men would soon be utterly consumed. He destroys some while He spares others, and who shall ask Him why He bears with nations more guilty than those whom He destroys and inflicts His vengeance upon those whose wickedness admitted of some excuse? His judgments are unsearchable and His ways past finding out when He suffers some to live, become old and wax mighty in power, while others less wicked perish in youth. Instead of questioning His absolute sovereignty over the nations, admire His longsuffering to us.

4. We ought to give glory to our Saviour as well as to the Father who has committed all judgment to Him. God has given Him power to destroy as well as to save. The destruction of Jerusalem was one of the great days of the Son of man, in which His glory appeared in the destruction of His enemies as well as in the salvation of His followers. Then was fulfilled, in part, what our Lord foretold in the presence of the Sanhedrin (Matt. 26:64). The God of Zion lives, the King of Zion reigns over the nations: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King, and give praise to His name for His great and terrible acts even though they perceive not His intention. He did all things well when He was on earth. He does all things well in Heaven.

5. We ought to take warning from the destruction of kingdoms by Divine judgments. Some tell us the ways of God are so incomprehensible to us that it is not consistent with the modesty and humility of such short-sighted creatures as we are to presume to give an account of His awful dispensations. He does what pleases Him and gives not account of any of His matters, and although we ought to believe He does always what is right, yet the special grounds on which this judgment ought to be formed are often so high above us that we must leave them to the secrets of God. True, we cannot penetrate the depths of any of the Divine counsels, yet much is said in Scripture about the grounds of God's displeasure against those nations whom He destroys, and Christian humility does *not* require us to regard those passages as sealed. Israel sinned greatly in the desert because they understood not the wonders of the Lord in Egypt, nor remembered the multitude of His mercies.

Our Lord, we are told, warns us in Luke 13:1, 2 against presumptuous intrusions into the secrets of God's counsel. True, He warns against the supposition that those whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices were greater sinners than others, yet in the very next verse Christ declared the miserable fate of those men was a warning to all His hearers to repent, lest they, too, perish. We should learn from His words there not to reckon ourselves better men or our nation a less guilty one than those which have lately been spoiled of their independence, merely because we have not suffered like judgments, and we should also learn that the Lord's voice in these judgments calls loudly to us, that *we, too*, may justly fear as great, or greater miseries, unless we repent.

But if their fate was a warning to others of the danger of impenitency, then sin must have been the cause of their miseries. It is not the execution of innocent men but of criminals that warns spectators not to violate the laws of their country. Charity does not require us to be blind to the faults of other men or nations. If we do not believe anything to the disadvantage either of nations or of individuals when we have clear evidence of its truth, all history would be useless, for its pages are filled with accounts of human wickedness. When we know that all ranks of a nation are chargeable with the very iniquities which Scripture declares bring the wrath of God upon a people, ought we not to fear lest the same crimes amongst ourselves, if repentance prevail not, will bring the same ruin upon our own heads?

We may readily discover (especially from the book of Jeremiah) what were the charges which Good's Prophets brought against the people of Israel and Judah. And it cannot be denied that many of the same sins are prevalent amongst ourselves and that we have persisted in them in opposition to many warnings of the Word and Providence of God. Can it be denied that our iniquities have been highly aggravated by the greatness and clearness of our light by great and signal mercies, by solemn engagements to cleave unto the Lord? When God speaks to us by His Word can we be so impious as to turn a deaf ear to Him? When He confirms the solemn declarations of His Word by many awful works of His Providence, what excuse is left us if we are still disobedient to His voice? [Shall it also be said of Great Britain “I gave her space to repent, and she repented not?”— A.W.P.]

Is not a loud cry heard from every part of the Continent, that God is greatly displeased with the sins of the nations? What is Napoleon that he should be able to do so great things? The iniquities of the nations have put the sword into his hand and strengthened his arm. God is sore displeased with the contempt of His

Gospel and Sabbaths, with the degeneracy of the Christian churches, with the wickedness of men of every rank, and has given commission to that terrible minister of His Providence to cut off and destroy nations not a few. Flee sin as from the face of a serpent. If all the serpents of the dust were commissioned to destroy us, they could not do us half the mischief that we have procured by our sins.

6. Use the means prescribed for averting from our land the dreadful calamities that have come upon other countries. But what can we do? Have we counsel or strength for war against an enemy flush with conquest, and conducted to new victories by commanders renowned for their courage and skill? Yet if you were called to expose your life for your king and country, such considerations ought not to deter you from a plain duty. If God be our Helper, we need not fear what man can do against us. But if that man is unworthy of the benefits which he derives from the government of his country, who would refuse to expose his life for its defense when Divine Providence calls him to do it? How much less does he deserve to share in these blessings who is so far from bearing his part in its defense that he adds, by his obstinacy in sin, to the causes of its danger, and perhaps of its ruin?

Our defense is in God, and He who provokes our Defender to depart from us is as really an enemy to his country as he who is chargeable with treason against the king. Although we should not increase the anger of the Lord by cursing and lying and other iniquities which bring down His wrath upon guilty nations, yet if we do not contribute our endeavour, in our places, to that *reformation of conduct* by which our judgments might be averted, we are but cold friends to our country. Yea, by neglecting what God requires of us as means of preventing judgments, we act the part of public enemies. They lie unto the Lord who pray to Him for the safety and success of our fleets and armies and yet do not sincerely desire and earnestly endeavour to have those evils removed which, if God governs the nations, are the most formidable obstacles to their success. Turn ye to Him from whom we have all deeply revolted; warn and exhort all on whom you can have influence to turn from the evil of their ways. Thus did the king and people of Nineveh: and they were spared.

7. Seek safety to yourselves in the evil day if it should come upon others. We cannot certainly say what will be the end of these wonders that are now taking place in the world. Who knows whether Britain will be able at all times to make an effectual resistance to the conqueror of the Continent? But we know that there is a kingdom which cannot be moved, and that all the faithful subjects of its King shall enjoy full security under His government. When God, by His Prophets, foretells the most tremendous events that shall ever come upon the world, He gives full assurance to His people that although He make a full end of the other nations, He will not make a full end of them.

Take the yoke of Christ upon you and learn of Him, and you shall not only be safe in the evil day but you shall look down with pity upon these oppressors that waste and destroy the nations of the world. We cannot certainly say that you shall be exempted from all share in these evils that go about from nation to nation. It may be you shall be hid in the day of the Lord's anger. But if you should fall by the hand of violence, angels will be sent down from Heaven to receive your souls and to conduct them to the abodes of bliss, where no tyrant that wears a diadem, no ruffian that carries a sword can reach you—where you shall share with Christ in those glories which the Father gave Him.

When Habakkuk heard of the awful works which God was about to do in the land, his belly trembled, his lips quivered at the voice, rottenness entered into his bones (3:16), yet he comforted himself with the well-grounded hope that he would rest in the day of evil and find everlasting solace and joy in the God of His salvation. “Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines, the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet will I rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation. The LORD God is my strength, and He will make my feet like hinds' feet, and He will make me to walk upon mine high places” (Hab. 3:17-19).

The overthrow of thrones and the desolation of kingdoms are terrible events: but we know of events far more awful for guilty men. The earth and its works shall be burnt up: the heavens being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. In that day all the oppressors of the earth, if they died impenitent, shall receive the full recompense of all the indignities they did to God—of all the slaughter and devastation of which they were the guilty instrument. But all who were found faithful to God in evil times shall then also receive full reward of all that they did for the service of God and the benefit of men. If those who would not give a share of their bread to the hungry and of their drink to the thirsty shall have their part in the Lake of Fire with the devil and his angels, what chosen woes shall be the portion of the destroyers of their fellow-men? If every cup of cold water given to a disciple shall in no wise lose its reward, how rich will be the reward of those who exerted their utmost endeavours to convert sinners from the errors of their ways and to save guilty nations from destruction?!—(George Lawson, Minister of the Gospel, Selkirk, Scotland, 1811).

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January, 1942

### **GOOD CHEER FOR THE WHOLE YEAR.**

“The eyes of the LORD thy God are always upon it, from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year” (Deut. 11:12). The historical reference is to the land of Canaan, in which a contrast is pointed between it and Egypt, where the Israelites had sojourned in bondage and misery. The contrast is a most striking and instructive one. Egypt was not watered as other countries: Zechariah 14:18 says that, comparatively, it has “no rain.” Being dependent upon the overflowing of the Nile at a certain season of the year, the waters were, at great cost and labour, stored up in reservoirs and afterwards eked out by degrees for the irrigating of the crops. This entailed much hard work in the making of canals and trenches to carry the waters from the reservoirs to the fields, and in tending the dykes and ditches, working in mud up to the knees. Two verses before our text intimates a man had to bestow as much pains on the watering of his crops as one does on “a garden of herbs.” But Israel in Canaan were spared such tasks, for the early and latter rains which God sent upon it were so abundant that His people were exempted from such toil: the fruitfulness of their heritage being a special blessing of Divine Providence, “a land which the Lord thy God careth for.”

Now Egypt is a *figure* of this world and its inhabitants of the unregenerate. Living “without God” the natural man is his own provider, looking entirely to himself for the supply of his needs. Consequently his cares are many: existence for him is a constant round of anxiety, fretfulness and disappointment. But different far is the lot of the Christian: he is the conscious object of God's loving solicitude, and though he has to labour for his daily bread and endure the same trials and sorrows as the ungodly, yet it is his happy

privilege to cast all his care on Another, knowing that He cares for him and makes all things work together for his ultimate good. Though still on earth, his citizenship is in Heaven (Phil. 3:20); though left in a hostile world, he is not left alone; though he is required to make a diligent use of all appointed means, he knows that his bread and water are “sure” (Isa. 33:16). Canaan and not Egypt is the type of his present portion: the eyes of the Lord are always upon him, from the beginning of the year even unto the end thereof.

First, our text speaks of *the Lords' pleasure in His redeemed*. This is an aspect of the Truth, one of the facets of the Gospel gem, which we do not sufficiently dwell upon. Just as we love to look at and constantly eye an object we prize highly, so the Lord God beholds His people with infinite delight. No doubt it is difficult for us to grasp this wonderful fact, yet it is a truth plainly revealed in the Scriptures: “For the LORD taketh pleasure in His people” (Psa. 149:4), “I will rejoice over thee to do thee good” (Jer. 32:41), He declares. What a remarkable word is that, “the LORD'S portion is His people” (Deut. 32:9). We are often reminded that the Lord Himself is the “Portion” of His saints (Lam. 3:24), but how rarely we hear of “*His inheritance in the saints*” (Eph. 1:18)! He set His heart upon them from everlasting and therefore does He contemplate them as His precious “jewels” (Mal. 3:17). He so loved them as to give His dear Son to and for them, and therefore He ever eyes them with complacency and delight.

Second, our text tells of *the Lord's presence with His People*. One day ere long they shall “behold the King in His beauty,” see Him “face to face” (1 Cor. 13:12), but that will not be till we are taken into His immediate presence. But the Lord beholds us now, not from afar, but by immediate contact. No far-away God is ours, but one who is “with us always even unto the end.” The “eyes of the Lord” being “upon” us is a figure of speech signifying not only His delight in us but also His nearness to us, as we read elsewhere of “the eternal God is thy refuge and underneath are the everlasting *arms*” (Deut. 33:27), “under His *wings* shalt thou trust” (Psa. 91:4). When the Lord said unto Moses, “I will send an angel before thee,” in effect Moses answered that will not suffice: “if *Thy presence* go not with me, carry us not up hence” (Exo. 33:2, 15). See here the goodness of our God: He will not entrust His people to any delegates or subordinates—“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5).

Third, our text announces *the power of God toward His people*. “The eyes of the Lord are *always* upon it” (upon us), and as though that is not sufficiently explicit for such dull understandings as ours, it is added, “from the beginning of the year even unto the end of the year.” How that brings out His power: none but God could perform such a wonder! There is never a single day or even *moment* when the Lord our God turns His eyes and heart away from His people in general, but they are constantly fixed upon every one of them individually, though many thousands of miles separate some of them. It brings out, too, His unwearied power: “Behold! He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa. 121:4). O Christian reader, seek to cherish this thought in your heart throughout this present year: not only will there never be a day nor hour when our God shall forget us, but not a moment when the eyes of His love and favour will be removed from us. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9).

Fourth, our text intimates the *Lord's Protection of His people*, for the previous clause says, “the land which the Lord thy God *careth* for.” What harm can befall one who is the object of God's unceasing

attention and care? How the fond parent wishes that his or her eyes could ever be upon the little ones: what anxiety often burdens their hearts as they think of them crossing dangerous roads on their way to school, and later as they leave home and go out into the world! Their prayers follow them, but their eyes cannot be “upon” them. Not so is it with the Lord: we cannot get beyond the range of *His* vision. “I the LORD do keep it: I will water it every moment, lest any hurt it, I will *keep* it night and day” (Isa. 27:3). If His eyes are upon me, His hand is also engaged to defend and guard me, and if *He* is for me it matters not who is against me.

Fifth, our text gives assurance of *the Lord's providing for His people*. This also appears from the preceding clause: “a land which the LORD thy God careth for,” which refers particularly to the bountiful supply of rain He sends upon it, making it so fertile and the produce so abundant as to be termed a “land of milk and honey.” So plentiful also is the spiritual provision which Jehovah makes for His people. The same grand truth is also inculcated in the words “The LORD *thy* God.” It is not an absolute God whose eyes are upon us, but one who is in covenant relationship with us. He who protects me is my Shepherd: He who cares for me is not only my God by way of power, but my Father by way of spiritual ties. He is the God of His people by nearest and dearest relationship, which ensures that no good thing will He withhold from them. This was what gave the Apostle such confidence unto the Philippians: “but my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (4:19).

“The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous” (Psa. 34:15). Here, Christian reader, is (to borrow an expression from Spurgeon) good cheer for the New Year. We know not what 1942 holds for us, but those who by grace are trusting in the atoning blood of Christ may enter it with the assurance that the friendly gaze of the Lord God is upon them. It is their privilege to enter each day rejoicing in the blessed fact that not for a single second will the Lord their God remove His eyes from them, cease to care for them, or fail to minister to them. Seek to frequently remind yourself that the Lord has pleasure in His people, that His presence is with and His power engaged on behalf of them, that they are assured of His protection and provision for their every need. Then should they not be of good cheer?! Should they not be delivered from worrying care? Should they not go forward in holy confidence and joy? Trials and tests are certain, and so also is their blessed issue. In the darkest hour, remember my brother, my sister, the eyes of the Lord your God are upon you: the eyes of His love, of His favour, of His compassion.

“The eyes of the Lord thy God are always upon” you. What should be our response? The perfect example which our Saviour has left us supplies the answer: “I have set the LORD always before Me” (Psa. 16:18). Yes, our eyes ought ever to be upon Him, and for these reasons. First, we shall only apprehend and appreciate God's sight of us as we obtain a sight of Him. One who is comparatively unknown to us cannot be confidently reposed upon. We must “acquaint” ourselves with Him if peace is to possess our hearts (Job 22:21); we must eye Him by faith if His mercies are to be spiritually enjoyed. Second, if God looks upon us, much more ought we to look upon Him. When He looks at us as we are in ourselves, He sees nothing but sinfulness and unworthiness; but when we look on Him—what a glorious Object do we behold! Third, the more we are occupied with the Lord our God, the more shall we be weaned from this perishing world, the more shall we be delivered from Satan's snares, and the better shall we be equipped for the fight of faith (Psa. 34:5). Fourth, the more our hearts are engaged with beholding our covenant God, the greater and grander foretastes shall we obtain of the bliss awaiting us. The glory of Heaven consists in a beholding

of God! God looking upon us, we looking upon Him: that is communion. O let us seek to be conscious each day of this year that the eyes of the Lord our God are upon us, and earnestly desire that our hearts may be fixed upon Him.— A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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January, 1942

### **THE GOOD SAMARITAN.**

It has long seemed to this writer that Luke 10:30-35 sets before us an exquisite picture of the sovereign grace of God unto those who have no claim upon Him. That grace is portrayed in the actings of Him who “came to seek and to save that which was lost.” First, we have depicted the state of the sinner: ruined, wretched, inert, helpless in himself. Next we are shown the worthlessness of human remedies, their unwillingness to come to the relief of the one fallen. Then we behold the Saviour succouring, fully meeting the needs of the fallen one. It is the blessedness of the Gospel which is here unfolded, the fullness of its provision, the sufficiency of its remedy. Consequently nothing is here said of its requirements—repentance and faith—nothing of man's responsibility to meet those requirements. Instead, the sinner is viewed as one who is entirely passive, everything being done for him and to him: he is the recipient of unsought compassion, goodness and free grace. He is not even represented as crying out for help, nor does he “co-operate” at any point. His case is desperate: a fit subject for the great Physician, a suitable object for the Lord of Glory to bestow favour upon!

Strange it is that some of the best commentators dissent from such an interpretation as we have outlined above. Thomas Scott sees in the passage nothing more than “a beautiful illustration of the law of loving our neighbour as ourselves, without regard to nation, party, or any distinction.” In his sermon thereon C. H. Spurgeon said, “I do not think that our Divine Lord intended to teach anything about Himself in this parable, except as far as He is Himself the great Exemplar of all goodness. He was answering the question, ‘who is my neighbour?’ and He was not preaching about Himself at all. There has been a great deal of

straining of the parable to bring the Lord Jesus and everything about Him into it, but this we dare not imitate. Yet by analogy we may illustrate our Lord's goodness by it." We must leave it to the judgment of our readers as to whether or not what follows is a "straining" or forcing into this portion of God's Word what is not really there.

The context begins at Luke 10:25, where we read of a Jewish lawyer asking Christ, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?"—his design being to draw from Him an incriminating reply. Doubtless he had heard that Christ taught salvation by grace through faith apart from the deeds of the Law. Therefore he determined to now demonstrate from His words that He was in open conflict with Moses, whose disciple he professed to be. Having no conception of salvation except by Law-keeping, he framed his question in a legal way: "what shall I *do*"? Yet in his remaining words he betrayed his gross ignorance and blindness, for whoever heard of *inheriting* anything by *doing*? To "inherit" one must be an "heir," and heirs are *born* such. A man must be born of God, be made a child of God by the supernatural operation of the Spirit, in order to be an "heir" of God (Rom. 8:17).

Having approached the Lord on the ground of creature performances, on the basis of *doing* something, Christ answered him accordingly: "What is written in the Law? how readest thou?" (Luke 10:26). It is most instructive and blessed to note how the Lord met different inquirers for He always dealt with them according to their moral state: it was not so much the question as the *questioner* He dealt with. There is only one way of dealing with those who are self-sufficient and self-righteous and that is to press upon them the righteous demands of the Law. The Law declares plainly enough what is required of man, what he must "do," namely, obey God, render full obedience to all His commands, or otherwise fall under His condemnation. It is either complete compliance with the Law's requirements or come under the curse of God: "For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the Law to do them" (Gal. 3:10).

The lawyer gave a correct summary of the Law's requirements (Luke 10:27), but was then met with a word from Christ well calculated to shatter his self-confidence: "And He said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live" (v. 28). It is not sufficient to *try* and obey God, it is not enough to do our best (though who among us ever really did so!): "do" them is the uncompromising demand of Sinai. Nor will a partial obedience suffice: "For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). Ah, my reader, law is inflexible and unmerciful in the very nature of the case. It presents a fixed standard and cannot do otherwise than pronounce guilty all who come short of it. How clear it is, then, that "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20). The Law should convince us that we are utterly undone, lost—that unless Christ saves us there is no hope for us.

"But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). Observe this verse opens with "but" not "and." The man was not sincere: it was not light he sought, but to ensnare the Saviour. Yet it seems to us the previous statement of Christ's had probed his conscience and made him feel uneasy. None had expressly condemned him, yet he now sought to "justify himself." Christ had drawn the issue and he sought to evade it: lawyer-like he attempts to raise a quibble over a word. "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy" (Matt. 5:43). Did not that

furnish ground for necessary distinctions? Was an Israelite alone the “neighbour”? was every Israelite such, or was there a third class between the two? And if the classification was so uncertain, might not the duty of loving the neighbour be held in abeyance? With such quibbles will men seek to escape the cutting edge of God's Word.

This brings us to the passage upon which expositors are disagreed—Luke 10:30. It opens with, “And Jesus answering said,” from which it is assumed that Christ did no more than continue His conversation with the lawyer, supplying a reply to his last question, an assumption or conclusion which is said to receive confirmation in verse 36, where the Lord asked His tempter, “which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?”—to which the lawyer answered, “he that showed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.” According to our understanding of verses 30-35 the Lord's design was twofold. First, He drew a picture or stated a case which exposed the state of His interrogator: only one with an *unneighbourly heart* would ask such a question! Second, He took advantage of the occasion to use the Law to bring into relief the glory of the Gospel, portraying one who was in desperate need of love's ministration and showing that by Himself ministering to that need He was the perfect Neighbour, the true “Friend of sinners.” Viewing the passage thus, let us now consider—

## I. The State of the Sinner.

With six short lines Christ drew the picture of fallen man: true of the human race in general, true of every man in particular. 1. He “*went down* from Jerusalem to Jericho” (Luke 10:30). In that brief clause there is both a refutation of the flesh-captivating theory (lie) of “evolutionism” and an allusion to the Fall. Man did not begin existence as a beast, to slowly fight his way upwards by his own efforts; instead, he was created in the image and likeness of God, but apostatised, and ever since his direction has been *downward*. Man was placed in a paradise of peace and rest, but he left that blissful state of his own accord and contrary to the expressed command of his Maker. The word “Jerusalem” signifies “the foundation of peace” and stands for heavenly and spiritual things, being the City of God, but apostate man has turned his back upon it, and now, “the way of peace” he knows not (Rom. 3:17). But more—he has gone down “to Jericho,” which is the place of destruction and of the curse (Josh. 6:26). Such is the estate into which man, by his revolt against God, has fallen: he has destroyed himself and lies under the curse of the thrice Holy One.

2. “And fell among thieves.” Travelers tell us that the road from Jerusalem to Jericho is a steep descent, the latter part of it going through a desert and it is still infested with brigands or highwaymen. In his original state of peace and rest, man was safe and happy, but by deliberately forsaking the same he encountered those who were the remorseless enemies of his soul. The Devil, the world and the flesh are the thieves which rob man of his heritage: they sap his energies, deprive him of the time which should be redeemed for eternity and take away all serious thoughts God-ward. They take from us, but never give; that was how they treated the “prodigal son” in the far country till he was reduced to penury and starvation. Egypt is the outstanding symbol of the world in the Scriptures, and what did it give to Israel? Nothing but the taskmaster and the whip. O my reader, Satan and the world may promise you “a good time,” but they are liars and thieves, waiting to rob you of your soul and your bodily health! Pay no heed to their siren voices, but hearken unto what God says to you.

3. “Which stripped him of his raiment.” How solemnly true to life is this! What did Satan do to our first parents? What did sin do unto Adam and Eve? It stripped them of that brilliant raiment of light with which God had originally covered them (Psa. 104:2 and cf. Gen. 1:27). As the result of their disobedience they stood naked before God with nothing to hide their shame. But man lost something more than his outward adornment by the Fall; through sin he was divested of his internal investiture—he was stripped of the robe of original righteousness in which the soul had hitherto appeared in immaculate purity before God. And thus it is with you, my reader, if you be out of fellowship with Christ—your sins are uncovered to the sight of Heaven—you are naked and exposed to the law, the justice, the wrath of God. Nothing but the atoning blood of Christ can hide your shame from a sin-hating and sin-avenging God. O that you might be brought to realize your wretched plight!

4. “And wounded him.” Sin and Satan have wounded man's body, which bring it down with disease and pain to the dust from whence it was taken. They have wounded his soul in all its faculties: his understanding with darkness, his will with a vicious choice, his affections with worldly-mindedness, so that he places his love upon the creature instead of the Creator. They have wounded his conscience with guilt, with fear of death and dread of Hell. They have stopped his ears to the voice of the Spirit and closed his eyes to the glory of God. How completely and severely man is wounded appears from that solemn description supplied by the inspired Prophet: “The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores” (Isa. 1:5, 6). Worst of all sin has inflicted a mortal wound which has deprived man of his spiritual consciousness, for he is insensible, *unaware* of his desperate state.

5. “And departed.” When those thieves had taken everything they sought from the traveler and left him sorely wounded, they callously went their way, caring nothing what became of their miserable victim. How heartless and cruel! Yes, though he appears as an angel of light, desiring to make us happy, Satan is a heartless fiend, anxious only that others should share his awful doom. Though sin clothes itself in many specious forms which attract the unwary, yet it is remorselessly cruel, having no concern for the grief it produces. Satan and sin rob us of health and strength, destroy manhood and womanhood, bring them to the place of acutest distress, and then leave them to their fate. Worldlings will pose as happy and friendly companions while a man's money lasts, but when adversity and retribution overtake him, they depart and desert him. Though history faithfully records these facts, each new generation refuses to profit from the warning and rushes headlong to its doom.

6. “Leaving him half dead.” Some have stumbled over these words, supposing that if the previous clauses depict the state of the *sinner* then the description falls short at this point. Not so, the terms are minutely accurate: half dead is precisely the condition of man since the Fall. Alive naturally, dead spiritually; alive earthward, dead heavenward; alive unto sin, dead toward God: no desire to please Him, no fear of Him, no love for Him—“She that liveth in pleasure is dead while she liveth” (1 Tim. 5:6). Moreover, men are only “half dead” with regard to the wages of sin: even now they are “alienated from the life of God,” but in the Day of judgment they shall be “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord” (2 Thess. 1:9)—when they are cast into the Lake of Fire “which is the *second* death” (Rev. 20:14). In these six lines then, we have a true picture in every part of its tale of misery, the faithful and unerring representation of fallen man, such as none but a Divine Artist could have drawn.

## II. The Passersby.

“And by chance there came down a certain priest that way; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, come and looked on him, and passed by on the other side” (Luke 10:31, 32). If careful attention be paid to their setting, and especially to their terms, these verses need occasion no more difficulty than those which precede or those which follow. But if they are regarded cursorily and only a blurred and general view be taken of their contents, then the fault is ours if we err in our understanding of them. If we approach them on the assumption (“presumption,” we ought to say) that they supply nothing more than the “drapery” of the parable, then no wonder if they convey no clear conceptions. Are we to regard each parable of our Lord's as designed merely to set forth a single and central truth, much in it being only “embellishment,” or as a Divinely-drawn picture, *no line* in it being superfluous and meaningless? Which is the more honouring to God?

This writer has no difficulty or hesitation in answering these questions. In his judgment it is quite clear that the “priest” and the “Levite” symbolize or set forth something definite, something which it is important for us to understand, something which serves to enhance the beauty and blessedness of that which follows. What that something is must be prayerfully inquired after and sought for by duly pondering each particular detail mentioned in connection with the “priest” and the “Levite.” First, it is said of the former that “by chance” he came that way. The same thing is intimated in the case of the “Levite” by the word “likewise.” Second, of the former it is said that he “saw” the half-dead traveler; of the latter that he “looked” on him. Third, in each case we are told that he “passed by on the other side,” that is he offered no assistance to the desperately wounded one—he ministered not to his sore needs. Let us seek to ponder these details.

1. “By chance there came down” that way a certain priest. “By chance” means “by accident,” or as the world speaks, “by a mere co-incidence” the priest passed along the road at that time. But does not this very expression present a real difficulty to those who believe that there are no “accidents” in a world which is governed by God—that nothing enters our lives by mere “chance” or without His appointment? Most certainly this was not a “chance” meeting with respect to Him by whose Providence our every act is ordered. Yet the solution is simple: the word “chance” signifies *without design*: he had no conscious intention, no deliberated purpose of encountering the poor sufferer. Therein lies the key which unlocks this section of the narrative: it was never the Divine will that religion as such should recover or save the sinner—whatever the reason why God gave the “priest” and the “Levite,” it most certainly was not for *that*.

2. What was denoted here by the “priest” and the “Levite”? Viewing the whole parable *dispensationally* the one fallen by the way-side would be Adam: the “priest” the patriarchal era, from Adam to Moses, when the firstborn was the priest, having the right to offer up the appointed sacrifices. Then followed the Levitical age, from Moses to Christ. But considered *doctrinally* and practically, the priest and Levite would stand for the moral and ceremonial law of Sinai. Was it then the purpose of Christ to throw contempt upon Law and Religion? Certainly not: His purpose was to teach us what, after nineteen centuries, vast multitudes in Christendom are still ignorant of, namely, that neither the deeds of the law nor religious performances can avail anything for a desperately wounded sinner who is dead toward God.

Baptism, confirmation, church-membership, fasting, attendance at the Lord's Table can neither impart life nor remove the guilt of sin. The most scrupulous observance of ordinances amounts to nothing for one who is under the wrath of God.

3. “He passed by on the other side.” The real force of this is nearly always missed. It was *not* that Christ here portrayed the priests of Israel as a callous and cruel class. No, according to his own inspired textbook the priest and the Levite *could do nothing* else. The “priest” was appointed for the specific purpose of offering sacrifices. But the wounded traveler had none, nor had he any money to purchase one, for he had been robbed! What, then, could the priest do for him? Nothing whatever. Nor was the “Levite” any better equipped: for him to have so much as *touched* a bleeding man would have ceremonially defiled him (Lam. 4:14)! Neither the one nor the other was competent to or qualified for delivering the ruined sinner, nor had God ever appointed them for any such end.—A.W.P.

(To be completed, Lord willing, in the February issue)

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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.

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### 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 precedes. 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 atoning 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 made 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.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1942

### **ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.**

Our lot is cast in a day when the truth of the eternal punishment of Christ-despisers has almost entirely disappeared from the pulpit, for though a verse or two thereon may occasionally be quoted in some places, where shall we go to hear a whole sermon on the subject? Some imagine that it is impolite to mention Hell but shall we pretend unto a refinement superior to the Scriptures? Some say sinners are not to be terrified into Heaven but won by the cooing of love: then why did the Lord Jesus speak so often of “the fire that never shall be quenched”? Others argue that such preaching would drive the people from the churches—fidelity and not popularity should be our aim. Certain preachers seek to excuse themselves on the pretext that the subject is so unspeakably awful they do not feel in a suitable frame of soul to handle it—then they should retire into their closets and beg God to fit their souls for the task and come not out till He does so.

It is far more than a mere coincidence that side by side with the disappearing of the truth of eternal punishment from the pulpit there is also the departing of the Spirit's presence and power from the churches. We have heard it said, It is not the Spirit's way to drive, but to draw. Yet *Christ* did not say that when the Paraclete should come He would “woo the world.” No, rather did He declare, “He will *convict* the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment” (John 16:8). Nevertheless the Spirit is pleased to use means—the Truth proclaimed by God's servants. And what is better suited to beget in careless and callous souls a fear of sin and evil-doing than for the pulpit to announce in plain terms the fearful retribution which awaits the same? If the preacher maintains a studied and guilty silence thereon, on what

ground shall the Spirit convict his hearers of their dire peril and their urgent need of fleeing from the wrath to come?

Side by side with the Spirit's departure from the churches is the withdrawal of His restraining hand from the world. The masses have become bolder and more brazen in wrong-doing and protests against their iniquities fewer and weaker. Crimes which formerly were dealt with severely have become gradually tolerated and winked at. Criminals are no longer regarded as rebels who must be made to feel the majesty of the law but are looked upon as objects of pity who should be reformed by gentle treatment. Corporal punishment has been banished from the schools. First offenders are let off with a "warning." Lawbreakers are lightly fined instead of being sent to prison. Murderers are frequently reprieved. A generation has arisen which has no conscience of sin, no fear of the hereafter, no regard for the rights of others—who give free rein to their lusts and are quite indifferent as to what anyone thinks of or says to them.

There are more and more sound preachers expressing shock at the rising tide of evil—but what are they doing to stem it? They express their horror at the lawlessness which now abounds on every side but how far are they conscious that they and their unfaithful predecessors are largely responsible for it? If the foundations are removed what shall the righteous do? and if the awful doom awaiting the unrighteous be concealed from them, if they are encouraged to believe they may sin with comparative impunity, then what remains to check them in their sinning with both hands and drinking in iniquity like water? The *mercy* of God has been stressed and His justice ignored. His *love* has been emphasized and His wrath concealed. His character as Father has been exalted and His *office* as Judge disregarded—there are scarcely any now left who believe "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10:31).

Almost two hundred years ago conditions in Britain and America were well nigh as bad as they are today. The churches were as dead and heretical. Wickedness abounded in high places. The Sabbath was profaned on all sides. The masses were utterly indifferent to the claims of the Most High. And what was the turning point? What was it that produced such a radical change for the better? What was the chief means used by God when the Enemy had come in like a flood? The records of history give a plain answer. The Lord was pleased to raise up a handful of men who went forth proclaiming that God, "hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 3:5) and that "the wicked shall be turned into Hell" (Psa. 9:17). Whitefield and his fellows in this country and Jonathan Edwards and his companions in New England dwelt mainly on the terrors of *Hell*, and the masses were sobered, the churches revived, and many were turned unto God.

The Divine promise is, "them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30) and God is not honoured by those who caricature Him and convey a false conception of His perfections. God is honoured by those who shun not to declare "*all* His counsel" and not by those who withhold those parts of it which are most distasteful to flesh and blood. God was superlatively honoured by His incarnate Son, and none ever portrayed the doom awaiting the damned in such vivid colours and unmistakable terms as He did. He who shall Himself be the Judge of the quick and the dead spoke of "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29) and announced that He will say unto the lost, "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). He it was who asked the Pharisees, "How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?" (Matt. 23:33). He it was that told of "the furnace of fire" where "there shall be

wailing and gnashing of teeth” (Matt. 13:42). What right has any minister to be regarded as a servant of Christ's if he is silent on such matters?

When the Lord Jesus commissioned His servants to “go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature,” He immediately added, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not *shall be damned*” (Mark 16:16). It is a great mistake to suppose that threats and terrors pertain alone to the Law of Sinai. Not so—a fearful punishment is annexed to the despising of *the Gospel*. Said the chief of the Apostles, “How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?” (Heb. 2:3). That there might be no uncertainty on the point, he declared in this same Epistle: “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense saith the Lord” (Heb. 10:28-30). And again, “See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven” (12:25).

Eternal punishment is an essential part of the Gospel message and they who withhold it deal deceitfully with the souls of men and keep back an integral portion of the whole counsel of God. It is meet that the Gospel should be armed with solemn threats as well as attended with gracious promises. It is honouring to Christ, the Author and Center of the Gospel, that it should be so. Christ is *King of Zion*, and a sceptre without a sword, a crown without a rod of iron would be impotent and useless. He has been given both. God has said to His ascended and enthroned Son, “Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies” (Psa. 110:2). “Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel” (Psa. 2:9). And it is because He has been invested with such power that the rulers of the earth are told to “Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling: Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little” (Psa. 2:10-12). “The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel” (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

We have by no means exhausted the contents of the Gospel by presenting Christ on the Cross as a Saviour for sinners, nor by proclaiming Him as the great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him. He must *also* be magnified as “King of kings and Lord of lords” who shall one day vindicate His honour and make a footstool of His enemies. He shall come forth in righteousness to “judge and make war,” having eyes “as a flame of fire.” “Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God” (Rev. 19:11-16). It is therefore the duty of the evangelist to plainly warn the rejecters of Christ that He is unto them “a saviour of death unto death” (2 Cor. 2:16)—that is, the sentence of death passed upon them by the Law shall be aggravated by the additional wrath they incur because of their contempt of the Gospel.

A few words now upon the spirit in which this subject needs to be taken up. It becomes us to approach such a theme with *deep solemnity* of soul. Everything in the Word of Truth is sacred and calls for sobriety and seriousness of attention. But surely among all that God has been pleased to reveal to us, there is

nothing which, in its own nature, is so calculated to produce profound awe as Jehovah's announcements of His purposed vengeance on the rebels against His government—the revelation of the righteous wrath of the Almighty. A careless and flippant attitude ill-becomes either speaker or hearer on such a subject as this. Yet in no hesitant and excusing manner should the pulpit treat of it. This doctrine needs no apology on our part but a bold yet reverent witnessing thereto. If the preacher reminds himself that it is nothing but sovereign grace which has plucked him as a brand from the everlasting burnings, he will be delivered from speaking thereon in an unholy manner.

This is a subject which requires to be examined and handled *dispassionately*. Unless all prejudice is banished from our minds we shall view it through distorted lenses. Surely it ill-becomes worms of the dust to take their place at the feet of Infinite Wisdom, all the time determined to hold fast their own foregone conclusions. What more impious than to pretend to examine God's written revelation that we may learn His mind, when we have already predetermined the matter? A Puritan said that we ought to bring our mind to God's Word as blank paper is brought to the printing press, that it may receive only the impressions of the type. We need to get away from all systems of theology, abandon all prejudices and preconceptions, and seek only “What saith the Lord?” We need to approach this awe-inspiring subject in the attitude of little children, saying to God, “That which I see not teach Thou me.”

This is a subject which needs to be investigated in a spirit of *confiding submission*. It is not at all a matter of what do the majority of professing Christians believe thereon. Nor is it a question of what appears to us to be most in accord with God's revealed character. It is not for us to decide what shall best vindicate the Divine benevolence and wisdom. How can the finite determine what most becomes Him who is Infinite? He who has known and believed the love of God will not question His love because he is unable to reconcile with it all that he is taught of God to believe. If I am incapable of understanding how an omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely holy and benevolent God should permit sin to enter this world, with all its attendant woes, then why should I be staggered by my inability to perceive the need for the penalty of everlasting punishment being passed upon those who die in their sins? There is much in God's present Providences we cannot understand, yet we know that the Judge of all the earth does right and in the confidence of that fact we may trustfully bow to His decisions in the Day of Judgment.

## I. Its Inflicter.

The One who passes sentence of eternal punishment upon the lost is the Lord God— in the exercise of His *vindictive justice*. Vindictory justice is that perfection in the Divine character which inclines God to punish sin according to its deserts, to render unto it the wages which are its due thereby clearing His own honour and establishing the majesty of His Law. The manifestative glory of God has been greatly sullied in this world. Consider Him as *Creator*. The greatest of His works in this mundane sphere is man, yet scarcely was he called into existence than he revolted against his Maker. Consider Him as the *Ruler* of this world. His laws have been made known only to be treated with utter contempt by those who have received them. Consider Him as the *Gracious One*. He sent forth His own dear Son into this world on a mission of mercy but the world hated and crucified Him. Nor was that crime peculiar to the men of the first century A.D., for by each succeeding generation of men since then Christ has been “despised and rejected.”

Now is the Most High to be mocked with impunity? Shall He regard with indifference the despising of His authority and the contempt of His grace? Are His majesty, His holiness, His omnipotence but empty titles? Shall His enemies defy Him forever? No, He has appointed a Day when He shall exonerate Himself and vindicate His great name. That solemn day has already been anticipated in part. From time to time God has interposed and given plain proof of His hatred of sin and His wrath upon sinners. At the beginning sentence was passed upon Adam and Eve and they were driven out of the garden of Eden. In the fearful flood sent in the days of Noah God made manifest His detestation of evil. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are “set forth for an example” of those who shall yet suffer “the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). In the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea the Lord evidenced the certain fate of all who shall fling themselves against the bosses of His buckler.

Yet fearful as have been God's judgments in the past they are but portents and a faint shadowing forth of that which is yet to come. They were for the most part local but finally shall be upon *all the wicked*. They were only upon the bodies of men, but shall be upon their souls as well. They were merely temporal but shall be eternal. “Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them” (Psa. 21:8, 9). How little are the masses aware of what a terrible and loathsome thing *sin* is in the sight of the ineffably Holy One. The great multitudes all around us regard sin as a mere trifle, as though it were but a thing of today which would never come up against them in the future. They go on unconcernedly peacefully in their iniquities, as though God had no Book of Remembrance in which is recorded their every word and deed.

In His Word God has plainly made it known that He is not going to ignore the transgressions of His righteous Law but rather that He will judge every defiant rebel. “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with Me: I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to Heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet My glittering sword and Mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me. I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy” (Deut. 12:39-42). That is the Lord's own solemn declaration, yet for all that is ever heard of it from the pulpit, it might not be in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, it is the declaration of Him who cannot lie and it shall most assuredly be made good in every detail.

Such a passage as the last quoted must not be regarded as revealing some blemish in the Divine character or blot upon His government. The justice of God is as truly a Divine perfection as His mercy, His wrath as His love. Because God is holy, He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner. So far from the Scriptures making any attempt to conceal this Divine perfection, they speak *more frequently* of God's anger and wrath than they do of His love and compassion and make no apology for His “fierceness” and “fury.” “The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth” (Psa. 9:16), as truly as His wisdom and power are displayed in the wonders of creation.

When the Most High announced the destruction of the Moabites and Ammonites He said, “I will execute judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the LORD” (Ezek. 25:11). Observe how this striking

sentence, “they shall know that I am the LORD” is repeated in connection with His judgment upon Edom (25:14), the Philistines (25:16), Tyre (26:7), etc. Those decimating judgments are represented as conduct worthy of the Holy One, as displays of His vindictive justice.—A.W.P.

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March, 1942

### A LEGAL SPIRIT.

Though the term “legality” occurs not upon the pages of Holy Writ, it is one which is found more or less frequently on the lips and pens of God's servants, and we believe rightly so, providing it is given its proper import and legitimate application. Yet this is by no means always done, for often the word is accorded a significance which it does not bear and is ascribed to persons and things very erroneously and unjustly. In theological parlance “legal” has quite a different force from its dictionary meaning, where “legalese” is defined as “to render lawful” and “legality” as “lawfulness.” It is this etymological significance of the term which has led many ignorant people to form a false conception of it when employed by theologians with quite another and distinctive sense. When we hear it said in religious circles that such and such a person “has a legal spirit” we should rightly conclude that he is infected with something harmful, yet when David exclaimed, “O how love I Thy Law,” he certainly averred a “legal spirit” in the *dictionary* meaning of that expression.

From what has just been pointed out we may perceive the need for and the importance of defining our terms. What, then, does a preacher mean when he warns his hearers against a “legal spirit,” that is, when he employs the term properly, in a *religious* sense? He means that we must beware of looking within for something to commend ourselves unto God, to beware of trusting in any of our own performances to gain the Divine approbation, to beware of esteeming any of *our* works as meritorious or deserving of something good at the hands of the Most High. This is what the Pharisees did; this is what the deluded Papists do, thinking to *earn* God's favour by their good deeds and to be justified by Him on that ground. Nor is such

senseless egotism by any means confined to Papists, though all are not so frank in openly affirming it, nay, many are not aware of such madness and self-conceit, for the heart is exceedingly deceptive and its workings often concealed from our consciousness.

It has been rightly said that all men are “essentially legalistic by nature.” Nor is this to be wondered at when we consider that sin has so darkened man's understanding and blinded his judgment that he calls darkness light, bondage liberty, and good evil. Being completely under the dominion of the Devil, fallen man is puffed up with pride, and instead of humbling himself beneath the mighty hand of God and confessing his ruined condition he is lifted up with complacency and foolishly imagines that he can not only do that which will meet with God's approval, but actually make Him his Debtor, so that justice *requires Him* to reward him for his excellent performances. For though the natural man is not so destitute of moral sense and conscience as to be unaware that in certain respects at least he fails in the discharge of his duties, yet he is so deceived by his wicked heart as to conclude that his good deeds far outweigh his wicked ones, and therefore he is entitled unto favourable consideration.

In view of the facts stated in the last paragraph we should not be surprised that the natural man—*every man* while unregenerate—makes an evil use of the Moral Law. That which is provided for the purpose of revealing the ineffable holiness of God, man turns into an instrument for advancing his own self-righteousness. That which is furnished to give man a knowledge of sin, he perverts into a means for proclaiming his goodness. That which is designed to make man conscious of his spiritual impotency, he twists into an ordinance for exercising his powers. That which is calculated to serve as a schoolmaster unto Christ, man distorts into a refuge in which he hides *from* Christ. Though the Law is spiritual and man carnal, though the Law is holy, and man corrupt, though the Law sets before him a standard of excellence which no fallen creature can possibly attain unto—yet the unsaved are so deceived by their own hearts and so deluded by Satan, they one and all imagine they can so far perform the Law's requirements that they have nothing to fear—and it is impossible to disillusion them until a miracle of grace is wrought within them.

Here, then, is “Legality” in its baldest form, stripped of all disguise. It consists of a spirit of independence, of self-sufficiency, of self-righteousness. It refuses to acknowledge that man is a fallen, depraved, lost sinner, “without strength,” without a spark of spiritual life. It refuses to acknowledge man is utterly incapable of recovering himself, of bettering himself, of doing anything which can meet with the approval of a sin-hating God. Even those who have sat under sound preaching, who have an intelligent knowledge of these solemn truths, who profess to believe them, yet, while they remain in their unregenerate state they have not the slightest spiritual apprehension of them nor do their hearts consent to their verity. Though they read in God's Word, “by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (Rom. 3:20), they believe it not, but continue in their vain attempts to keep the Law in order to be justified by God. A spirit of legality binds them hand and foot as in fetters of steel.

In like manner a spirit of legality causes every unregenerate hearer to pervert the Gospel. Though the Gospel be exactly suited to the dire need of fallen man, yet it is far from being suited to his proud heart. It calls upon him to “Behold the Lamb of God,” but in order to do so he must look away from himself—that is, he must renounce himself, deny himself, repudiate all fancied goodness in himself—and this is

something which he is very far from being willing to comply with. The Gospel is a revelation of pure grace, of sovereign mercy, unmerited favour, offering to enrich spiritual paupers, to clothe the spiritually naked, to save Hell-deserving sinners: but that is something the self-righteous and independent heart of fallen man cannot tolerate. Yet few are frank enough to openly avow their antipathy to Divine grace; rather do multitudes pretend to admire it, and profess to receive it. But in fact they still trust in their own religious performances and simply bring in Christ as a make-weight to meet their deficiencies. In reality, they believe in grace *plus* works, Christ *plus* something of self.

Even Christians themselves have the root of legality still left within them and are to a greater or less degree infected with a self-righteous spirit to the end of their days. Though a Divine work of grace has been wrought in them, enabling them to see, feel and know they are depraved, polluted and vile creatures—causing them to close with Christ as He is presented to them in the Gospel and cast themselves upon Him as their only Hope, their Deliverer, their all-sufficient Saviour—pride still works within them, and as it does they are ready to give heed to some of Satan's lies and imagine that they are now in themselves something more, something better than Hell-deserving sinners. The whole Epistle to the Galatians demonstrates our danger at this point and most solemnly warns us to what fearful lengths a legal spirit may carry those who have savingly trusted in Christ. False teachers had introduced “another Gospel,” affirming that Christ was not sufficient, that they must be circumcised and submit to the whole ceremonial law in order to be justified, and instead of rejecting this error with abhorrence, the legal hearts of the Galatians so far accepted it that the Apostle had to say “I stand in doubt of you.”

Even where Christians are preserved from such awful lengths of legality as the Galatians, this root of bitterness is constantly bringing forth its foul and poisonous fruit, though for the most part they are quite unaware of it so subtle and secret are its activities. Whenever we are pleased with ourselves and our performances, a legal spirit is at work within us. When we are less conscious of our deep need of Christ pride is to that extent possessing our hearts. Whenever we feel that God, in His providences, is dealing severely with us and we ask what have I done to call for such chastisement? a self-righteous spirit possesses us. When we entertain hard feelings against God because He does not answer our prayers as quickly or as fully as we think He should, we are guilty of this sin—when we should marvel that He ever deigns to hear us at all! When we are hurt because fellow-Christians slight us and do not pay us that respect we feel we are entitled to, it is sure proof we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. “Your glorying—whatever form it takes—is not good: know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6)—a little “legality” or self-righteousness will defile the whole soul and grieve the Spirit of God.—A.W.P.

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### **DISTRESS OF MIND.**

I am sorry to hear lowness of spirits continues to hang upon you: they have been your companions though neither pleasant in themselves nor profitable to the soul. Low spirits are the effects of sin: they are frequently the very workings of unbelief, refusing comfort in the Consolation of Israel through faith in the promises and declarations of the Gospel; and they are an engine by which our adversary the Devil gains more advantage against many serious Christians than by any other of his numberless devices. To what purpose, you will say, are these things mentioned to one who has so much of the unhappy experience of this powerful disease, both in body and mind? I will tell you for what purpose I mention them.

1. I would have you consider them as your sinful infirmity, and that you feel them to be exceeding sinful.
2. Consider your low spirits as an occasion of much hurt and disquiet to your soul; they rob it of present peace and expose you to many temptations in that melancholy disposition. You cannot set a proper value upon the grace of God which bringeth salvation; you do not trust yourself upon the Lord and stay yourself upon your God; you do not in hope believe against hope. How much loss does your soul sustain as to its peace and spiritual interests, by such a disposition!
3. I mention these to stir you up under the felt sense of great guilt, deep pollution, utter unworthiness, weakness and treachery, to essay taking hold of God's Everlasting Covenant made with His dear Son, and richly freighted with all the mercy your condition stands in need of and all the grace your most enlarged wishes can desire; for this Covenant is the storehouse of all the mercy of God, this Covenant is the conveyance of all grace and of all spiritual blessings to you and me. Yes, to you and me is the conveyance of the grace of God, as well-pleased in His

Son to sinners, to enemies, to the stout-hearted, to backsliders, to the wretched and miserable. Are not these our characters? Surely they are. Is not the Covenant of Grace the conveyance of Christ and all spiritual blessings to sinners of these descriptions? Yes, it seems to be the design of the Scriptures to set wide open a door of hope for such wretched sinners, and so, for you and me.

Now in the consideration of all this good which the God of all grace is showing us, what doth He require of us to take hold of His Covenant? To take hold of His Covenant of free and rich grace, to approve of its infinitely wise and merciful constitution, to accept of and rest upon Christ as our righteousness, as the alone paymaster of all our enormous debt; to view the promises of the new Covenant as promises of eternal life in Christ to *us*, and to esteem this Covenant, whose condition Christ fully performed and whose promises God will surely fulfill, all our salvation, resolving to hope in it, to live in it, to seek and expect comfort, holiness, grace and glory in no other way. Thus let us take hold of it and endeavour to keep hold of it. The Christian life has a close connection with our keeping fast hold of the Covenant of Promise. It is not a continued summer with our earth; yet we are sure, even in the coldest frost and in the longest nights of winter that the spring and summer will return, because God hath made a Covenant concerning their succession; even so in the Christian life it is very usual for the heirs of salvation to be in sorrow and fear, in great bondage, to have cold and dark winter nights. But when the saints live and walk by faith, they set their foot upon the stable rock of Jehovah's promise, and smile for joy in the pleasant assurance that His Word will be made good to them at last; and in the meantime that their strength shall be proportioned to the day of trial. This is the way we should endeavour to live in this howling wilderness, who have not yet come to rest in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. Does iniquity abound with us; we have a sweet passage in Micah 7:18-20. Does Satan terrify us? We have some delightful expressions in Isaiah 59:16-20, and in 49:24-26. Have we treacherously departed from the Lord? and do we fear our case is so desperately bad that it shall never be better? Every syllable in Jeremiah 3 and Hosea 14 is sweetly suited to such a view of ourselves. Is Providence dark and lowering? Matthew 6:19-34 is remarkable comforting; so are Psalms 91 and 107. Whatever be our condition, the 119th Psalm is both a source and pattern of proper exercise.—A. Hall, 1777.

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### ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

The solemn truth which we are here considering is no invention of the Church in the dark ages of ignorance and superstition but is a revelation of Holy Scripture which gives light to all who receive it by faith. The Author of eternal punishment is not the Devil acting in the desperation of his malignity but the Lord God in the exercise of His *vindictory justice*. The One who made and sustains us and who shall yet judge us according to our deeds has an infinite abhorrence of sin and has evidenced the same by passing sentence of infinite severity upon it, which sentence will in due course be enacted upon every soul which has not fled to Christ for refuge. God has not left His enemies in ignorance of the indescribably awful doom awaiting them: He has in His Word solemnly and plainly announced, again and again, the inexorable retribution which shall overtake those who spurn His authority, trample upon His laws, and mock His ambassadors. He has placed within themselves a monitor which assures them that “they which commit such things are worthy of death” (Rom. 1:32).

Vindictory justice in the Deity has nothing in its nature inconsistent with His infinite goodness, as His infinite goodness has nothing in its nature inconsistent with His vindictory justice—for all the Divine perfections are harmonious, blending together as do the varied colours in the rainbow. It is generally lost sight of that the very love of God is “a consuming fire” *with respect to sin*. If the more holy a man becomes the more he abhors evil, then the greater his love for virtue the stronger his hatred of vice. How much more so must this be true of Him who is the Holy One. In His pure sight sin is an infinitely odious, hateful, ill-deserving thing. Therefore as He announced, “Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all

things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them” (Gal. 3:10). The malediction of the Most High rests upon every unpardoned transgressor of His Law. When a wise and righteous monarch puts a traitor to death, it is not because he takes pleasure in the destruction of his subjects but because he delights in the honour of his crown and the good of his kingdom.

The vindicatory justice of God was eminently displayed at the Cross. The incarnate Son who never did any wrong and in whose mouth was no guile became the Surety of His guilty people and God dealt with Him accordingly. The sins of the unjust were laid upon the Just and therefore did Divine justice exact full satisfaction from Him. God “spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up” (Rom. 8:32) unto a penal and painful death. “Awake O sword (He cried) against My Shepherd, and against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of Hosts, smite the Shepherd” (Zech. 13:7). The awful wages of sin must be paid Him to the fullest—the righteous requirements of the Law shall not be abated one iota and therefore Christ was “made a curse for us” (Gal. 3:13). “It pleased the LORD to bruise Him,” He “put Him to grief” when He made “His soul an offering for sin” (Isa. 53:10). “All Thy waves and Thy billows are gone over Me,” cried the Sin-bearer as the storm of God's judgment burst upon Him. “Thy wrath lieth hard upon Me” (Psa. 88:7), Christ exclaimed.

## II. Its Design

In creation, in redemption, and in the destruction of the wicked, God has one grand end in view—*His own glory*. Whatever subordinate ends may be accomplished by the punishing of the lost, the principal aim which God has in view is the manifesting and magnifying of His own perfections. Yet it is only as we perceive the origin and true nature of the Divine government that this will be evident to us. Alas, the view which obtains almost universally in Christendom today is that the primary design of the Divine government is the good of its subjects, which is to confuse the ultimate end with a subordinate advantage. It is true that the creature can only be really happy while rendering full obedience to the Divine Law but so far from that proving the Law was established because of its tendency to promote the felicity of its subjects, it merely makes plain those benevolent tendencies because the subject was adapted to the Law. The government of God was not adjusted to the nature and benefit of man, rather was man constituted with reference to it

To make the *creature* an end to the Creator and not the *Creator* an end to the creature is to turn things upside down, making that supreme which is subordinate and that subordinate which is truly supreme. The happiness of the creature was not the end which God designed in the promulgating of His Law—that was contemplated as an *effect*—a subordinate and incidental effect which would certainly follow from the accomplishment of the nobler purpose which actuated the Lawgiver. No, the true end of the Divine government, as in all the institutions of the Most High, must be sought not in the good of the creature, however much that may be promoted, but in the *glory of God*. That is the only object worthy of the Almighty, for it includes in itself all that is exalted in excellence, illustrious in truth, sublime in holiness. Because God is independent and self-sufficient, it is impossible that His manifold works should proceed from any other motive but the counsel of His own will. How blessed that this is so when we are assured it is the will of Him who is possessed of infinite perfections and unchangeable blessedness!

Why was God pleased to go forth into acts of creation? Was it not to reveal Himself, to declare what He is, to make known the attributes of His being, to manifest His glory by inscribing His character upon the works of His hand? When He made man was it not in His own image and likeness? Why did He give to man His Law? As a matter of expediency?—perish the thought! Was it not rather to make known the fact that to those creatures whom He has endowed with intelligence and moral accountability He sustain the relationship of *Ruler*? Through His Law a faithful and permanent exhibition is made of the eternal principles of rectitude and holiness which belong to the essence of the Godhead. Why did the Most High permit the entrance of sin into His domains? Must it not have been because its presence afforded more occasion for the *display of His perfections* than had its absence?—the wonders and glories of redemption can only shine forth as evil supplies the dark background.

“For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever, Amen” (Rom. 11:36) is a Divine summary of all the institutions and achievements of Jehovah. “Of Him”—they are as their originating Cause: “Through Him”—they are as their Director and Sustainer. “To Him”—to His honour and glory they necessarily tend as their supreme End. Nor is the doom of the damned any exception. The government of God is founded in His right to exact obedience from His creatures and His Law reveals the requirements of His holy will. The punishment of those who transgress it is clearly revealed—“He will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7)—is the authority of the Ruler, the majesty of His Law, the way He regards disobedience, the manifestation of His detestation of sin and His satisfaction unto His justice. In the everlasting fires of Hell will be displayed the inextinguishable hatred of God to all iniquity.

It is because sin has blinded men's judgment that they do not perceive the glory of God is as truly evidenced in Hell by the damnation of the lost as it is in Heaven by the salvation of the redeemed. If the salvation of the latter be “to the praise of the glory of His grace,” the damnation of the wicked is equally to the praise of the honour of His holiness and justice. The fact is that the unregenerate are concerned only about their own private and personal interests, having no regard to the honour of God. But once a sinner is renewed by the gracious power of the Holy Spirit, He begins to see (though as “through a glass darkly”) the beauty of vindicatory justice. He is able to discern that “the ministration of *death*, written and engraven in stones, was *glorious*” (2 Cor. 3:7). As he is convicted of his sinfulness, he perceives not only that eternal punishment is his just due but that God had been honourable and glorious had he been made to suffer the due reward of his iniquities in the everlasting burnings of Hell.

But it is not only through an experimental acquaintance with Sinai that the believer discovers the glory of God's punitive justice—it is also and supremely at *Calvary* that his eyes are opened to see the loveliness of that Divine perfection. As faith beholds the spotless Lamb bearing *his* sins, it also beholds the excellence of Divine justice in smiting the Lamb. Filled with horror and anguish at the multitude and heinousness of his crimes, overwhelmed with wonderment that the Just should be willing to take the place of the unjust, through tear-dimmed eyes he perceives the grandeur of that justice which exacted full satisfaction from the Vicarious One. There at Calvary the eyes of faith perceive that “mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). Though the preaching of Christ crucified is to the self-righteous Jews a stumblingblock and to the philosophic Greek foolishness, the *believer* glories in the Cross, for he sees therein the supreme display of all the Divine perfections!

Illumined from on high the believer perceives the evicting of the sinning angels out of Heaven down to eternal darkness and despair, the turning of our first parents out of Paradise and sentencing them and all their posterity to death and the final sentence passed upon the apostate at the day of judgment as so many glorious displays of the Divine character, punishing sin according to its deserts. It was such an illumined spirit which moved Moses to say—as he beheld Pharaoh and his hosts (types of finally impenitent sinners) dead upon the sea shore—“I will sing unto the LORD, for He hath triumphed gloriously . . . Thy right hand, O LORD, is become glorious in power; Thy right hand, O LORD, hath dashed in pieces the enemy . . . Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods (or “mighty ones”), who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders!” (Exo. 15:1, 6, 11). In the execution of His vindicatory justice Jehovah appeared *most excellent* in the eyes of His servant.

God will receive infinitely more honour from the judgment which He will finally execute upon His enemies than He has received dishonour from all their rebellions. Their revolt was, comparatively, for a moment, but the penal satisfaction He shall exact will last through the endless ages of eternity. When mystical Babylon shall sink like a millstone into the sea under the vengeance of the Almighty and many shall be cast into Hell at that moment, there shall be heard “a great voice of much people in Heaven, saying, Alleluia, salvation and glory, and honour and power, unto the Lord our God: for true and righteous are His judgments, for He hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication and hath avenged the blood of His servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia; And her smoke rose up forever and ever” (Rev. 19:1-3).

Because the vindicatory justice of God is so excellent a Divine perfection it was a becoming and glorious thing in God to “bruise Him and put His soul to grief” who had espoused the cause of His elect and appeared as their Representative, even though He were His own Son—and for the same reason it was a becoming and glorious thing in the incarnate Son to say, “Thy will be done.” And since vindicatory justice is a blessed and glorious perfection in God, He is altogether lovely—there is *no* blemish in His character. If it were otherwise it would be impossible to conceive of the Lord Jesus Christ making such a glorious appearance as He will at the Day of Judgment—rather would He be draped in sackcloth. In “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God” (Rom. 2:5), He whose meat it is to honour the Father shall without the least reluctance pronounce the final sentence on the wicked; yea it will give Him ineffable delight to put an end to the controversy which has existed between God and His rebellious subjects.

### III. Its Nature.

Under this head we do not propose to examine the constituent elements which will comprise the retribution visited upon the wicked: rather would we take note of its intrinsic character. From what has been said under the previous divisions there will be the less need for us to dwell upon this aspect of our subject at much length, yet we cannot ignore it entirely because it is at this very point that enemies of this truth are most accustomed to introduce their errors. Romanists are not alone in believing that the fires of “purgatory” have a purifying effect upon the souls of those who enter “limbo”: the great majority of Universalists contend that the final punishment meted out upon unbelievers is disciplinary in its character, that the Lake of Fire so far from being the ultimate Penitentiary of the universe is a grand Reformatory,

and that after a season therein its inmates will emerge as purged of their depravity and fit to take their place among the citizens of Heaven

It should be sufficient refutation of such an opium dream to point out that there is not a single verse in all the Scriptures which substantiates it. There are many, many verses which speak of the wicked being cast into Hell but there is not one which declares that any shall escape therefrom, or that after serving a term therein (be that term a brief or lengthy one) any shall come forth fitted to dwell with God's people. Not only is there nothing in the Word of God which warrants us to entertain any hope for those who die in their sins but on the contrary there is much which excludes, which utterly forbids, such a hope. The very nature of the punishment inflicted upon the finally impenitent cuts away all ground from under the feet of "Universalists," for the intrinsic character of it is *retributive* and not educative: the sentence passed upon the lost is a *penal* and *not a remedial* one.

The nature of God's punishment upon sin appears with unmistakable plainness at Calvary. There we behold One who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, and separate from sinners" dying a criminal's death and what is infinitely stranger, suffering not only at the hands of men but of God, too. The Psalmist declared, "I have never seen the righteous forsaken" (37:25), but here is the Righteous One Himself forsaken of Heaven and earth alike! What is the explanation of this mystery? Why, the Righteous One had voluntarily taken the place of the unrighteous. The sentence which stood over the head of God's elect was "cursed are the guilty" and out of unfathomable love Christ interposed saying, Let that curse fall *on Me*. The elect of God were "by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3), but Divine grace provided a deliverance for them from that wrath: not by making light of their sins, not by abolishing the penalty of His Law, but by admitting a Surety to take their place, assume their liabilities and being dealt with accordingly.

That is why Christ's perfect obedience was followed by such terrible punishment: fulfilling the requirements of the Law's precepts He must also endure its penalty. Being charged with His Church's guilt, He receives the wages which were due her. The justice which pursued God's sinful people smote their Substitute. Christ had presented Himself before the Divine tribunal on their behalf and God was avenged by Him for their crimes, wounding Him for *their* transgressions and bruising Him for *their* iniquities. The Saviour offered Himself unto God as a satisfaction for their wrongs and gave Himself a ransom for their debts. The sufferings of Christ were punitive and propitiatory. The very *mode* of His death demonstrated the *penal nature* of it. Under the Mosaic law death by hanging on a tree was reserved for the greatest of criminals and Christ's execution on the Tree (1 Peter 2:24) was the public testimony that God's curse rested on Him (Gal. 3:13), that He endured the *wrath* of Jehovah! The sufferings which the Redeemer experienced were a *judicial* infliction, imposed upon Him by a sin-hating God.

It is not out of *love* to them that the wicked will be cast into Hell, as being designed for their ultimate happiness but rather that in them God means to "show His *wrath* and make His power known" as their being "vessels of wrath fitted to destruction" (Rom. 9:22). The righteous are considered as "wheat" but the wicked are likened unto "tares" and "chaff" and when it is said, "but the chaff will He burn with unquenchable fire" (Luke 3:17), it is certainly not for their refining or purifying. The "damnation of Hell" (Matt. 23:33) and being "punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord" (2 Thess.

1:9) are expressions very far from connoting a *process* of remedial discipline. “They that perish” (1 Cor. 1:18) and “which drown men in destruction and perdition” (1 Tim. 6:9) is language the very opposite of conveying the idea that the portion awaiting those who die in their sins is nothing worse than a means for their reformation. The “second death” (Rev. 21:8) closes the door of hope upon all who experience it.

It has been rightly pointed out that “Even in human governments, which contemplate the injury rather than the wickedness of actions, penal laws cannot be sustained upon the sole basis of expedience. Nothing can be punished as harmful which is not felt to be vicious” (J. H. Thornwell). That is true and it is both an instructive and solemn task to study history in the light of that fact, particularly the marked change for the worse during the last fifty years by those termed “Christian nations.” Where the blessing of God rests on a people, side by side with His gracious power being exerted in the churches He quickens the public conscience so that crime is made odious in their sight and their moral instinct demands that it should be punished severely. Providence so orders things that self-interests and the good of the State make a majority feel that if evil is to be suppressed evil-doers must be dealt with a firm hand and thus God's disapprobation of sin is reflected in the conscience of society.

Consequently, when the penal nature of Divine punishment is plainly and faithfully proclaimed, God's abhorrence of sin is held up to public view, and not only does this produce a salutary effect upon those who receive such teaching, but they in turn become the “salt” of society—staying the unregenerate carcass from utter corruption. Conversely, the disappearance of the doctrine of eternal punishment has had the most disastrous consequences upon the pew and the masses outside. Necessarily so—for when the Spirit is quenched in the churches His restraining hand is removed from the world, the fruits of which quickly become apparent. Conscience goes to sleep, moral sentiment is dulled, horror at evil-doing wanes. Judges are fearful of imposing adequate sentences lest they be regarded as heartless tyrants. Government becomes more and more lax, for the leaders know the masses will no longer tolerate stern measures and so expediency rather than moral principle shapes their policy. The outcome must be the complete breakdown of law and order unless God is pleased to intervene, either in desolating judgment or restoring mercy.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1942

### AN EVANGELICAL SPIRIT.

Once more we employ a term which does not occur in so many letters and syllables on the pages of Holy Writ. Though its sound is not heard there the sense and substance of it most certainly is and it is one which we can scarcely avoid using if we are to express ourselves accurately and intelligently. While all men are essentially “legalistic” by nature none save those to whom the Gospel of Christ has been made the power of God unto salvation is possessed of a truly “evangelical” spirit. The terms are antithetical, as much so as are darkness and light, bondage and liberty. The one is the product of the Fall, the other is the fruit of regeneration. The one is the breathing of self-righteousness the other is the outcome of self-renunciation. The one is the work of pride and independence, the other is the outflow of humility and dependence. The one is the enmity which the carnal mind has against the grace of God, the other is the acquiescence of the renewed mind in undeserved mercy.

An evangelical spirit is found where the heart beats in accord with the essence and substance of the Gospel. The Gospel makes nothing of man, and everything of Christ. The Gospel comes to us on the assumption, or rather the fully demonstrated *fact*, that we are lost creatures—hopelessly, helplessly, irretrievably lost in ourselves. It comes unto us as those who are justly condemned by the holy Law of God, as those who are even now under the Divine curse, as those who are rushing headlong to eternal destruction. The Gospel tells of the amazing provision which God has made for depraved and vile sinners. It announces the exceeding riches of grace unto those who are His inveterate enemies. It proclaims a full and perfect salvation for all who are willing to receive it. It not only publishes a full pardon and

deliverance from Hell, but it promises eternal life and everlasting glory to all who believe its glad tidings; and it offers these inestimable blessings freely, “without money and without price.”

The Gospel makes known how God can show mercy unto the rebellious without compromising His justice, how He can receive the ungodly without sullyng His holiness, how He can remit the penalty of sin without dishonouring His Law, how He can save the very chief of sinners to the praise of the glory of His grace. The Person and work of Christ supplies a full and perfect answer to each of these “hows.” God has not shown mercy at the expense of justice, for He set forth Christ “to be a propitiation (a satisfaction rendered to Divine justice) through faith in His blood” (Rom. 3:25). God has not sullied His holiness but rather has He exemplified and glorified it by refusing to spare His own dear Son (Rom. 8:32) when He bore the sins of His people. God has not slighted the Law, for it was magnified and made honourable by Immanuel's rendering unto it a perfect and perpetual obedience in thought, word and deed. God can save the very chief of sinners unto the praise of the glory of His grace without requiring any price from them because He has received full payment of his debts in the sacrifice of Calvary, which was and is of infinite value.

Where the Gospel is applied by the supernatural power of the Spirit, beating down all opposition thereto, the mind cordially assents to its contents, the heart rejoices therein, the will responds thereto, and thus an “evangelical spirit” is born in the soul. The sinner is evangelized in the true and full sense of that word. He not only throws down the weapons of his warfare against God but he repudiates the filthy rags of his own righteousness. He has been made to see and feel himself so condemned by the Law as to know there is no help in himself. He has been brought to realize that his soul is sick unto death and that none but the great Physician can do him any good. He now knows himself to be a pauper, utterly dependent upon Divine charity and therefore the Gospel of the grace of God is most suited to his need and most glorious good tidings unto his heart. It is as truly welcome to him as food to a starving man, as a cup of cold water would be to one who was suffering the fires of Hell.

Wherever an understanding has been Divinely enlightened, wherever a heart has been opened to receive the Gospel of God, there an “evangelical spirit” prevails. The language of such an one is, “Thou O Christ are all I want, more than all in You I find. Your righteousness prevails to justify me before God. Your holiness is my sanctification. Your blood removes my foulness. Your merits meet my unworthiness. Your power is sufficient for my weakness. Your riches supply all my need. I have heard Your voice, Lord Jesus, tell me not of ought beside. I have seen Your face, Lord Jesus, all my soul is satisfied.” Such an one has been accepted in the Beloved, accorded a standing before God which neither the Law nor Satan can challenge, and made nearer and dearer to God than are the holy angels. Tell such an one that something else is still required from him before God can regard him with approbation—that the redemption of Christ must be plussed by his own good works—and he rejects such an aspersion with the utmost abhorrence, as the Devil's lie.

It is, however, to be pointed out that whereas all “evangelical spirit” is the opposite of a “legal” one, it is also the very reverse of a licentious one. Christ saves His people “from their sins” (Matt. 1:21): that is, from the love and dominion of them as well as from their pollution and penalty. The Gospel announces the amazing grace of God, but His grace is not exercised at the expense of righteousness, rather does it “reign

through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21). The very grace which proclaims a free and full salvation without money and without price also works mightily and transformingly in its recipients, “teaching us (effectually, not theoretically) that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world” (Titus 2:12). The Gospel is very far from inculcating lawlessness. When the Apostle asked, “Do we then (by preaching salvation by grace alone) make void the Law through faith?” he answered, “God forbid: yea we establish the Law” (Rom. 3:31), for the believer is “under the Law to Christ” (1 Cor. 9:21).

The more the Gospel works effectually in those who believe, the more are they conformed, both inwardly and outwardly, unto the image of Christ. And the Lord Jesus declared, “I delight to do Thy will, O My God: yea Thy Law is within My heart” (Psa. 40:8). This, too, in their measure, is the experience and acknowledgement of each one saved by Him. Said the Apostle, “I delight in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom. 7:22), which was the voicing of an essential element in an “evangelical spirit.” Where the heart beats true to the Gospel, the possessor is not only delivered from legality or self-righteousness but he is also preserved from spiritual lawlessness. While no sinner is or can be saved on account of his own doings, so far from the Gospel and salvation by grace being the enemy of good works, it inculcates them: “For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10 and cf. Titus 2:14).

An “evangelical spirit,” then, is one which cleaves to the happy mean between two evil and fatal extremes: legality and lawlessness, self-righteousness and self-pleasing. Against these two evils the Christian needs to be constantly on his guard both in doctrine and practice, for while on the one hand there is ever a tendency in him to “frustrate the grace of God” (Gal. 2:21), to “fall from grace” (Gal. 5:4), which is done whenever we bring in anything of our own as the ground of our acceptance with God. On the other hand we are ever prone to “turn the grace of our God into lasciviousness” (Jude 4), which is done when we presumptuously give license to the flesh and follow a course of self-will on the pretext that this cannot jeopardize our eternal security in Christ. To counter the uprisings of the spirit of legality we must constantly remind ourselves that we have nothing good but what God has wrought in us, and therefore we have no cause for boasting—that we are what we are by the grace of God. To oppose the workings of licentiousness, we must continually ponder the fact that we are not our own, but “bought with a price” and that we most glorify Christ as we follow the example He has left us.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### MINISTERIAL COUNSEL.

I am sorry to find you complaining of the state of religion among you. Infidelity abounds and Christians grow cold and lukewarm, sufficient causes of lamentation these; yet both ministers and private Christians have reason to be ashamed of their frequent neglect of those important duties a serious and regular discharge of which has a tendency to revive the power of religion. Though I am fully sensible nothing will do without the presence of the Spirit of God, yet so far as we live in the neglect of any means, so far we are certainly culpable. The great defect of ministers in the present day, I apprehend, is *impertinent conversation*, and not labouring *in private* to impress upon the minds of their hearers a sense of what is delivered in public. If our visits were more religious we might find our labours more owned. When we are in Christian company, where we may use the greatest freedom, how backward to a serious enlivening conversation! And we can spend, perhaps, a whole evening among our less religious hearers and not drop a single word that savours of the real power of godliness. I speak too much by experience, having often lost the disposition to converse about the mind of God, by impertinent chat, etc.

It is a difficult matter to retain a serious temper and inclination to interject with indifferent subjects serious and suitable reflections; we are either ashamed or afraid to be speaking for God, or else our inclination is wanting, or some trifling excuse or other keeps us from the discharge of our duty. I am often convinced of my neglect, and promise to strive against it; but I am soon overcome with fear, or filled with that shameful modesty which is a great hindrance to usefulness. It is certainly a minister's duty to preach in private, and to use plainness and faithfulness. When, instead of enforcing in private what we preach in public we

readily join in impertinent talk, unrenewed persons are hardened in their impenitency, and if they had any convictions upon this they presume to take encouragement either to think well of their state, or to think there is nothing in religion, by which means our public performances are despised, or looked upon as a mere form. It is necessary that we use plainness with sinners *in private* (as well as publicly admonish them), and talk about their souls in the most serious and affectionate manner if we would be successful.

Infidelity appears more and more barefaced; it requires courage and resolution now to confess Christ before men: things cannot continue long in the present posture, but either a reformation or some sore judgment—God grant it may be the former! One minister to another—1751

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1942

### **ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.**

#### IV. Its Dreadfulness.

If God is not slack in fulfilling His promises, equally certain is it that He will not be so in executing His threats. He has told us plainly in His Word how He regards sin and has faithfully warned us that He will by no means clear the guilty—that the penalty which He has pronounced shall surely be inflicted upon them. Sin, says the Lord, is that “abdominal thing that I hate” (Jer. 44:4) and the reality and intensity of His hatred will be evidenced by the vengeance which He visits upon it. Dreadful beyond words, beyond our power to conceive, beyond the bounds of human imagination will be the doom of the damned, even the “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). Impossible is it for us to exaggerate the frightfulness of those torments which are prepared for the lost: the most blood-curdling descriptions which poets and artists have furnished of the same fall very short of the dreadful reality itself.

“Who knoweth the power of Thine anger? Even according to Thy fear so is Thy wrath” (Psa. 90:11). It will be seen from the title of this Psalm that Moses was the instrument selected by the Holy Spirit for the writing of it, and his eminent suitability and fitness for this particular task appears in many of its details. Again and again he expresses therein that which comported with his own experiences and observations. Notably is that the case with the verse before us: Moses had witnessed the outpourings of God's anger and the irresistible power thereof as none belonging to any other generation (save Noah's) before or since has beheld. He had seen the horrible plagues upon Egypt, culminating with the death of all her firstborn. He

had been a spectator of the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea. He had been present when “there went out fire from the LORD and devoured” Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron (Lev. 10:1, 2) because they had used strange fire in the tabernacle. Awe-inspiring demonstrations were those of the wrath of a holy God burning against them who scorned His authority and insulted His majesty.

Well, then, might Moses exclaim, “Who knoweth the power of Thine anger?”! Had he not also been present when “the ground clave asunder” that was under the feet of Korah, Dathan and Abiram so that “the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and their houses, and all the men that appertained unto Korah and all their goods: they, and all that appertained to them, went down alive into the Pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation” (Num. 16:31-33)? He had witnessed the awful doom which overtook the unbelieving Hebrews when the Lord “sware in His wrath” that they should not enter Canaan, “whose carcasses fell in the wilderness” (Heb. 3:11-18). What terrifying exhibitions were these of the Divine displeasure! How impotent is the creature when the Most High rises up to smite him—less capable is he then of defending himself than is a worm to resist the tread of an elephant.

“God is jealous, and the LORD revengeth; the LORD revengeth, and is furious; the LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries and He reserveth wrath for His enemies. Who can stand before His indignation? and who can abide in the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like fire and the rocks are thrown down by Him” (Nahum 1:2, 6). When the Almighty shall come forth to execute vengeance upon His enemies, the whole Creation will tremble and so intense will be the fire of His wrath that this world and all that is therein shall be burnt up and its very elements “melt with fervent heat” (2 Peter 3:10). Then will be exposed those perversions and misrepresentations of the Divine character which men had fondly framed as a sop to their conscience and a salve to their fears. Then shall be swept away their refuges of lies that God is too gentle and merciful to ever make good His threats. No confederacy of His foes shall be successful in withstanding the storm of His fury—though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not pass unpunished. There will be no avenue of escape available—His goodness had been abused, His mercy refused, so that His wrath must then be endured.

The fearfulness of the punishment awaiting the wicked was adumbrated in the unspeakable sufferings of the Saviour. Divine justice dealt with Christ as the Substitute of His guilty people and there was meted out to Him the penalty which was due them. Had Christ been nothing but a mere creature the awful punishment visited upon Him had utterly crushed Him, but because God had “laid help upon One that is mighty” He was able to “endure the whole of wrath Divine.” Being God and Man in one Person, the Lord Jesus was capable of enduring infinite suffering—to endure compressed into a brief season that which shall be spread out through all eternity upon the wicked. How terrible the suffering which the Redeemer experienced is intimated in both Old and New Testament alike, where His inward anguish and His outward afflictions are made known to us. It is by solemnly and reverently pondering them that we are enabled to form some faint conception of the intolerable wrath which God pays out to sin.

Concerning the Redeemer's passion we read of “the travail His soul” (Isa. 53:11)—that which His body received at the hands of men was nothing in comparison with what He experienced within from the hand of God. His inward anguish was evidenced when the full cup of God's wrath was put into His hands. “Now

is My soul troubled, and what shall I say?" (John 12:27). He was put to such a strait that, considered as Man, He was in a manner nonplussed, at a loss for words. The horror of what lay immediately before Him was so great that He could not give expression to it. As our blessed Lord approached the Cross the horizon darkened for Him more and more. From earliest infancy He had suffered at the hands of man. From the beginning of His public ministry He had suffered at the hands of Satan: but at the Cross He was to suffer death at the hands of God. Jehovah Himself was to bruise Him and put Him to grief, and it was this which now overshadowed everything else.

In Gethsemane Christ entered the awful gloom of the three hours of darkness at Calvary. There we hear the Holy One saying, "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death . . . O My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me: nevertheless not as I will, but as Thou wilt" (Matt. 26:38, 39). He views the black clouds arising, He sees the fearful storm about to burst upon Him, He premeditates the unspeakable horror of being abandoned by God. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful": the Greek signifies He was begirt with sorrow, that He was immersed in the anticipated wrath of Heaven. All the faculties and powers of His soul were wrung with anguish. Mark employs another form of expression, "He began to be sore amazed" (14:33)—a remarkable expression that to describe the God-man!—the Greek term denotes the greatest extremity of amazement, such as makes one's hair to stand on end and flesh to creep. Mark adds, "and to be very heavy," which intimates an utter sinking of spirit. His heart was melted like wax at the sight of the awful cup. Luke tells us that He was "in an agony" the Greek word meaning to be engaged in a combat, for His holy soul shrank from encountering the undiluted wrath of a sin-hating God.

So intense was the Saviour's agony, that cold as was the night, His sweat was "as it were great drops of blood pouring down to the ground" (Luke 22:44), yet no hand of man was smiting Him! And here we perceive the fitness of the place chosen for the scene of Christ's terrible but preliminary suffering, for "Gethsemane" means "the olive press"—the olive press being where the life blood of the olives was pressed out drop by drop. It was indeed a fit footstool to the Cross, a footstool of an agony unutterable and unparalleled. On the cross Christ actually drained the cup which was presented to Him in Gethsemane—producing that terrible cry—"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me!" There it is we behold what a horrible thing sin is, what a terrible thing God's wrath is, and what madness it is to contend with Him who will by no means clear the guilty. The death of Christ was "the wages of sin" and that death was a violent and cursed one which had extreme anguish of soul and body going before and along with it. Said Christ, "For if they do these things in a green tree what shall be done in the dry?" (Luke 23:31). If God inflicted such sufferings upon the Holy One, what must be the portion of those who are full of sin, fit fuel for the flame!

Consider now the awful sentence itself: "Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). Mark the Judge: this is none other than Christ, for "God hath appointed a day in the which He will judge the world in righteousness by that Man whom He hath ordained" (Acts 17:31). It is an error to suppose there is a greater austerity in the Father than there is in the Son toward sinners, imagining that the latter is easier to deal with than the former. So it is equally wrong to conclude the Son is more tolerant toward sin than is the Father, that He is more willing to acquit the guilty. The self-same One who cleansed the temple of its traffickers and who pronounced such awful denunciations upon the scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 23) shall in the Day of Judgment utter this irrevocable

doom upon the wicked. Then shall they learn how terrible is “the wrath of the Lamb.”

“Depart,” says He to them. “Depart from Me,” the alone Saviour, the One you scorned, whose easy yoke you refused. “Depart from Me”: get out of My sight; I never wish to behold you again. “Ye cursed”: O what a malediction! You have cursed others and now you are cursed yourselves—cursed in your bodies and cursed in your souls. You are cursed of God, cursed of angels, cursed of the saints, and henceforth you shall curse yourselves for your folly and madness. All your curses shall now recoil upon your own heads. “Into everlasting fire”: the most fearful and tormenting of the elements. “Into everlasting fire” which because of its intensity is termed “a furnace of fire” (Matt. 13:42), even “the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone” (Rev. 21:8). The stench of the brimstone rendering it the more intolerable. It is “unquenchable fire” for the wrath of God is inextinguishable, and “everlasting fire” for an eternal God shall preserve eternally all who are cast into it.

No ordinary fire is this, any more than that which burned in the bush which consumed not (Exo. 3:2). It is a “prepared” fire, prepared by God. It is prepared “for the devil and his angels,” that is, for God's arch-enemy and his fellows. Yet it is a fire which torments the body, evoking “wailing and gnashing of teeth.” Nevertheless it is different from any fire now known unto man, for this infernal fire has no light or brightness attending it and those cast into it experience “the blackness of darkness forever” (Jude 13). It is a fire which shall everlastingly burn and yet consume not its victims. As the bodies of the wicked as well as the bodies of the righteous are to be raised by God, so a miracle of Divine power shall be wrought upon the one as truly as upon the other. As the latter are vessels of mercy “prepared unto glory” (both their souls and bodies fitted for Heaven), so the former are “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction” (Rom. 9:22)—having both souls and bodies capacitated for enduring the everlasting fire.

“And these shall go away into everlasting punishment” (Matt. 25:46). The Greek word which is here rendered “punishment” is rightly translated “torment” in 1 John 4:18 (“fear hath torment”), which affords clear proof that so far from the wicked being annihilated or in a condition of insensibility they consciously suffer excruciating anguish. So also the words “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7): note the present tense of the verb—only one who is conscious is capable of “suffering.” How dreadful that torment is may be gathered from other passages, as in “tormented day and night, forever” (Rev. 20:10). The same word is found again in “their torment was as the torment of a scorpion when he striketh a man” (Rev. 9:5)—the virulent poison of which produces horrible agony. In Revelation 12:2 it is employed to express the travail pangs of a woman “pained to be delivered.” In Matthew 14:24 it is used to describe the experience of a ship in an angry sea, “tossed with waves.” Said the demons to Christ, “Art Thou come to torment us before the time” (Matt. 8:29).

In addition to the agony entailed by physical suffering there will be unbearable mental anguish, for all the faculties of the soul will be preserved in the lost. The understanding, which had been atrophied by unbelief, shall then fully understand the sinfulness of sin and the madness of fighting against the Most High. The conscience, whose voice was so often silenced by the clamourings of pleasure, shall then perform its functions and be fully alive to the wrath of God. But most awful of all will be the workings of memory. O what repining, what remorse, what self-condemnation shall fill the hearts of the damned as they recollect opportunities wasted, privileges abused, warnings spurned, entreaties despised! Then shall

they recall those faithful sermons to which they turned a deaf ear and the offers of mercy they refused. Here they took no time to seriously consider the welfare of their souls and preparations for the hereafter but in Hell they shall have time enough, for there will be no other employments to hinder. When it is too late they will have no other work than to reflect and consider.

## V. Its Duration.

We shall not attempt to enter upon a critical discussion of the Hebrew and Greek words which the translators of the King James Version rendered “eternal,” “everlasting,” and “forever and ever.” In the first place, we believe its translators were endowed with quite as much honesty and scholarship as any who have followed them, so that it would be both trivial and arrogant to challenge their renditions. In the second place, we are fully assured that the Providence of God so superintended the preparation of that particular version which was to prevail in the English-speaking world for three centuries, that its translators were graciously preserved from any serious errors. In the third place, any critical inquiry of the Hebrew and Greek terms is quite needless: the plain and unlettered man can verify for himself the accuracy of our English equivalents from collateral considerations which render him independent of the schools. When he reads, “these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal” (Matt. 25:46), he has no difficulty in perceiving that the suffering of the lost is as endless as the bliss of the saved.

Among the reasons which forbid us to believe that the wicked will ever be released from punishment and restored to the Divine favour are the following. First, the nature of sin. Sin and guilt are inseparably connected and therefore sin deserves punishment: if, then, guilt cannot be eradicated, the punishment must be interminable. Before the punishment could end the guilt must cease to exist and before a lost sinner can be guiltless his criminal actions must become innocent ones. But can vice become virtue even though a million years should pass over it? Vice and virtue, sin and holiness are founded in the very nature of things and therefore must forever remain immutable so that what once deserved punishment will forever deserve punishment. As then the nature of sin cannot be changed nor its guilt obliterated, therefore the punishment of the damned must of necessity be eternal.

Second, the character of the damned. That their character is irremediably and irrevocably fixed is clear from many considerations. Their resurrection is termed “the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29) which expressly excludes all hope of their regeneration in the next life. The fact that their Judge shall say unto them, “Depart from Me ye cursed” intimates plainly there is no possibility of their reclamation. As we have pointed out in an earlier article God's aim in their punishment is not their personal benefit but the taking of satisfaction unto His vindictory justice. It is not to save but to destroy them that they are cast into the Lake of Fire. It is not to express His tender mercy but to manifest His indignation and wrath that the torments of Hell are designed. God's end in chastising the righteous in this life and punishing the wicked in the next are diametrically opposite. Punishment has never softened the unregenerate. The plagues sent upon Pharaoh only served to harden his heart and the six thousand years of punishment which Satan has already experienced has not rendered him any less the inveterate enemy of God. The punishment of the damned will but confirm their malignant disposition. Therefore it is written in the very last chapter of God's Word, “he that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still” (Rev.

22:11): as the tree falls, so will it forever lie.

Third, the Atonement. In previous sections we have appealed to the sufferings which Christ endured at the hand of God when He received the requital which was due the sins of His people—as proof of the nature of the punishment awaiting the wicked—that it is penal in its character and not disciplinary or reformatory. We have also directed attention to Christ's sufferings as illustrative of the intolerable portion awaiting the lost: if the anticipation of bearing God's wrath caused the Saviour such horror and anguish, moving Him to make supplication “with strong crying and tears” (Heb. 5:7) and making Him to sweat great drops of blood, how much more will feeble creatures sink down and be utterly overwhelmed by God's vengeance? We revert once more to the Cross as indicating the duration of the punishment awaiting the damned. If the Sacrifice needed by the Church must be one of infinite worth, could her guilt be only of limited proportions? That sin for which none but an eternal Person could make expiation must have penal consequences of unlimited continuance. And since there “remaineth no more (further) sacrifice for sins” (Heb. 10:26)—when the Sacrifice of Christ has been spurned, then the doom of the lost is irremediable.

Fourth, the never-dying worm. In the space of six verses (Mark 9:43-48), during a single discourse, the Lord Jesus referred no less than five times to 1. “the fire that never shall be quenched” and three times to “where their worm dieth not,” and never was He guilty of idle repetition. When a man dies and his body putrefies it breeds worms which prey upon his carcass—a fearful adumbration of that which shall afflict the souls of those suffering “the Second Death.” That never-dying worm typifies the reflections of memory and the reproaches of conscience tormented by the wrath of God which will forever gnaw at the soul. This is “the sting of death” (1 Cor. 15:56) which “at the last biteth like a serpent and stingeth like an adder” (Prov. 23:32): unpardoned sin being the venom of death's dart. This expression at once gives the lie to the theories of annihilation and future restitution to happiness, for on either of these suppositions their worm would die. Christ affirms “their worm dieth not”—forever and ever finding that to prey upon in the lost. Consequently, we read, “the smoke of their torment ascendeth up forever and ever” (Rev. 14:11) without cessation or termination.—A.W.P.

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### ETERNAL PUNISHMENT

#### VI. Its Justice

It is at *this* point that the loudest outcries are made against the truth we are here engaged with. To the natural man it appears there is such an enormous disparity between the offense and its retribution that he deems the Divine Judge to be guilty of unrighteousness—as if the guilty criminal is the one best qualified to determine the fairness or unfairness of his sentence. What, he asks, can a human being do within the short span of his earthly existence which calls for endless sufferings as its recompense?—as though the criminality of actions is to be measured by the length of time it takes to commit them! What proportion is there, he objects, between a whole lifetime of sinning, where that life is measured by a few brief years and *eternal* punishment? It has ever been thus. In the days of Ezekiel Israel complained, “The way of the Lord is not equal” (18:25). If, then, men have murmured at the equity of God's *temporal* judgments we need not be surprised at their challenging the justice of His *eternal* judgment.

So long as the heart of fallen man remains in love with sin, while there is within him an inveterate hatred of the Holy One, until his mind ceases to be blinded by Satan it is impossible for him to view sin and its punishment in their true perspective. Not until a miracle of grace has been wrought upon him, not until he is made a new creature in Christ Jesus, is he capable of perceiving the “due reward” of his iniquities. Only when his sin-blinded eyes are opened, when spiritual vision is vouchsafed him, in those moments when in God's light he is enabled to “see light” can he in any measure discern the righteousness of God's claims

upon him and the infinite enormity of failing to meet those claims. Only then does he begin to apprehend the ineffable holiness of the One with whom he has to do, the immeasurable “sinfulness of sin” and the illimitable extent of its ill deserts.

Above we have said that only “in those moments” when the regenerated soul is permitted to “see light” in God's light is he enabled to perceive the “due reward” of his iniquities, for even the vision of the believer is blurred as soon as communion with God is severed, yea, at best he sees now “through a glass darkly”—in comparison with the vision which will be his in the glorified state. Much of the time even the Christian perceives not the exceeding sinfulness of sin (constituting as it does so large a part of himself) and in proportion to that failure he is incapable of discerning the equity of Divine retribution and is disposed to feel that God acts with undue severity both toward himself and with his fellows. It is useless to deny this, for it is a fact of which every renewed heart is conscious and is made to mourn because of its opposition to the Divine government. Let us illustrate what we have in mind by two examples taken from Holy Writ.

When the sacred ark was being brought home from the land of the Philistines, the oxen stumbled and the ark shook and Uzzah put forth his hand to steady it—when he at once fell to the ground a mangled corpse, smitten by the hand of God (2 Sam. 6:7). Was not Uzzah actuated by an excellent motive? He could not bear to see the sacred ark fall into the mire. And is not the reader stunned, staggered, as he learns of the terrible retribution which overtook such an apparently trivial offense? Take again the “man of God” who so fearlessly rebuked Jeroboam for his idolatry and so faithfully delivered the Divine message to him. The king was so moved that he invited him to go home with him and refresh himself but he refused because that was contrary to the orders of God. Later, he encountered an old Prophet in Bethel who assured him that the Lord had bidden him to eat and drink in his house. Deceived, the man of God did so and immediately after a lion met him by the way and slew him for his disobedience (1 Kings 13:24).

Though the Christian is fully assured that the Judge of all the earth can do no wrong, yet such incidents as the above are apt to perplex him, for unless he is able to view them in God's light he is at a loss to discover how the punishment fits the crime. Ah, my reader, that is because we fail to perceive that Jehovah sees not as man sees. God recognizes the evil to which we are blind. God never exaggerates our sins but looks upon them as they actually are, as the “abominable thing” which He hates (Jer. 44:4). Equally strange may it appear to us that the entire human race would be ruined by a single act of our first parents. If so, it is because we see not what a black, vile, abominable thing SIN is. The least sin of thought or imagination is so heinous that God would be perfectly just if He banished us to Hell the moment we gave place to the same. Sin is an immeasurable evil. If the mere act of touching the ark brought death upon Uzzah then what a desperate evil sin must be!

Had the entire human race been sent into hopeless perdition no slur had been cast upon the Divine character, no breach made in the integrity of the Divine government, no wrong inflicted upon the creature. The fact is that we are utterly incapable of measuring the contrariety and opposition there is in sin unto Divine holiness. God alone knows what is the real demerit and desert of sin. We seek not to convince the objector of these things but to establish the believer in them. First, then, let it be pointed out that God's will is the rule of all righteousness and therefore whatsoever He does is righteous. God is answerable to none,

gives no account of His matters and is not to be measured by any human standard. Where reason fails us faith must hold fast to the Divine perfections.

Second, there is a principle of evil in the sinner which eternally tends to sin and therefore it is but just for God to punish the sinner eternally: the duration of the punishment corresponds with the disposition of the delinquent. If the sinner were permitted to live on this earth forever he would dishonour God forever, transgress His Law forever, despise Christ forever, do despite to the Spirit of Grace forever. How just, then, that God should punish the sinner forever. Sinners sin as long as they can and did not His grace put a stop to their lusts, their hearts would never put a stop to them. The sinner's will to sin is everlasting, how just then that his punishment should be so. The torments of Hell will produce in them no change for the better, and as their impenitency is endless so is their doom. Therefore does God say, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still" (Rev. 22:11).

Third, sin entails infinite guilt. God is infinitely worthy of love, honour and obedience and therefore our obligation to render the same unto Him is infinite. Since God is infinitely glorious our obligation to avoid the least sin against Him is infinitely great. Consequently it necessarily follows that the evil of sin is infinite and therefore it deserves infinite punishment and the very perfections of God require that it should have its due reward. Since there is in sin an infinite evil, it is meet that God should infinitely hate sin and be the infinite enemy of it and that the expression of that hatred should be suited to His character. Penalty is levied according to the dignity of the person wronged: to strike a common person is an offense—to strike the king is far more heinous—but to rise up in rebellion against the King of kings incurs infinite guilt and punishment. Since the creature cannot bear an infinite punishment intensively, he must bear it extensively: that is to say, by suffering it eternally.

Fourth, the wicked will only experience that which they personally chose. While they lived on earth the means of grace were available and those means set before them. Heaven and Hell, glory and misery, eternal life and eternal death as inevitable alternatives. If they chose the latter in preference to the former, they have only themselves to blame. If they preferred "the pleasures of sin for a season" rather than those "pleasures which are at God's right hand forever more," they can only now curse themselves for their folly. An all-sufficient Saviour is set before them in the Gospel but they declared, "we will not have this Man to rule over us." Having despised the riches of Divine grace it is but equitable they should suffer the severities of Divine justice. When the Lord expostulated with them they answered, "Depart from us, for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (Job 21:14). How equitable, then, that He should yet say to them, "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire."

How just it is that the wicked should suffer in the same everlasting fire which God had prepared for the Devil and his angels. Every descendant of Adam does by his actions and his continuance in sin justify Satan in his rebellion against the Lord God. Therefore it is most equitable that those who die impenitent should be confined with him in the same prison and be tormented under the same expression of Divine wrath. Sin is a cursed work for it is nothing less than enmity against the Divine government and it is this which rendered Satan and which renders his subjects accursed. For the curse of God to seize such is most righteous, nor do the demons call this into question (Matt. 8:29). And how meet it is that the sinner should suffer physical torment as well as mental anguish. When his body is put into the grave he has not done

with it forever: it shall be raised “to shame and everlasting contempt” (Dan. 12:2), for as it was partner with the soul in sin, so it shall be sharer with the soul in punishment.

## VII. Its Aggravation.

Man enters this world a sinner (Psa. 51:5), yea, a cursed sinner (Rom. 5:18), for we are all “by nature the children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3); nevertheless he is born under a government of mercy and a way of escape is set before him in the Gospel. Christ is freely offered to men and if the very chief of sinners surrenders to His sceptre and trusts in His atoning blood there is deliverance for him: “This is a faithful saying and worthy of *all* acceptance: that Christ Jesus came into the world to save *sinners*” (1 Tim. 1:15). O the marvel of Divine grace: that God should make overtures of peace unto His enemies and send His own Son here to die for the ungodly! How much greater, then, must be the guilt of those who despise and reject Christ: “This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light” (John 3:19). As an added condemnation is incurred, so a severer punishment is ensured: “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto Heaven, shall be brought down to Hell: for if the mighty works which have been done in thee had been done in Sodom, it would have remained unto this day. But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment than for thee” (Matt. 11:23, 24).

A Shelter is provided against the coming storm, a Hiding-place better than of caves and rocks (Rev. 6:15), a City of Refuge where there is perfect shelter from the sword of the Avenger—but woe be unto those who scorn that provision of mercy. “He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing?” (Heb. 10:28, 29). As there will be degrees of honour and bliss in Heaven—some vessels of mercy having a larger capacity than others—so there will be degrees of torment in Hell: “That servant, which knew his Lord's will and prepared not himself, neither did according to His will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall he beaten with few” (Luke 12:47, 48). Far worse shall it be for those in Christendom who die impenitent than for those in the darkness of heathendom. According to the talents bestowed, the opportunities afforded, the light vouchsafed, privileges enjoyed, so is our responsibility. And in proportion to our neglect of such blessings so is our criminality and the measure of our criminality will determine the degree of our torment.

From what has been before us we may perceive. 1. *The pressing duty of the preacher*. He is required to proclaim not only the blessings of the Law but its curses also and to set forth the inevitable alternatives attending our response to the Gospel—salvation to those who believe it—damnation to those who believe it not. It is his business to cry Fire! fire! escape for your lives! If to spare his own feelings or in order to be popular with his hearers he remains silent about eternal punishment, God will yet require their blood at his hands. “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke; then a great ransom cannot deliver thee” (Job 36:18): that summarizes his message to the unsaved. The forerunner of Christ warned his hearers to, “Flee from the wrath to come” (Luke 3:7). The Saviour Himself bade men, “fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in Hell” (Matt. 10:28). His Apostles were actuated by this solemn motive: “knowing therefore the *terror* of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Cor. 5:11). If I see my

neighbour's house smoking shall I not rush in and warn him? and shall not the watchmen of Zion sound the alarm as men go heedlessly unto the everlasting fire?!

2. *The vileness of sin.* This is something which the present generation has no conception of. Crime is committed without compunction and when detected is dealt with leniently. Lying, theft, drunkenness, immorality have become so common that they are no longer regarded with abhorrence. If wrong-doing between man and man is looked upon with such tolerance and penalized so lightly, then sin against God is scarcely thought of at all. God is not a solemn reality today: if He is believed in at all He is considered as a kind and indulgent Being who is far too loving and merciful to deal severely with His erring creatures. O what a rude awakening is in store in the Day to come! My reader, form not your estimate of sin from the common sentiments prevailing among your deluded fellows: measure it rather by the fearful threats of the Almighty: ponder it in the light of eternal punishment. The wrath of God is no vain scarecrow as you will yet discover unless you fly to Christ for refuge.

3. *The state of the world.* This world which lies in the Wicked One is a vast madhouse. Who but those who are bereft of their senses will sport on the edge of a precipice where but a single step divides them from a horrible and painful death? Yet that is precisely the case with the masses all around us: bent only on pleasure, with the Bottomless Pit waiting to receive them! Mental derangement is but a shadow of the spiritual insanity which possesses the souls of the unregenerate. What a solemn word is that of the prodigal in the far country: "When he came to himself" (Luke 15:17)—previously he was beside himself. See you poor lunatic with a wreath of straw on his head and stick in his hand proclaiming himself a king: equally crazy are they who seek satisfaction in the honours and riches of earth. Mad, indeed, are they who live as those without a soul, who think not about eternity, who crave only to eat, drink and be merry—while the fires of Hell are being kindled for them!

4. *The value of the Gospel.* The darker the night the more welcome the stars. The more desperate the disease the more desirable a competent physician. The graver the danger the more appreciated a deliverer. It is upon the ink-black background of sin that the glories of Heaven's evangel shine forth. It heralds a Divine Redeemer who came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), to deliver Hell-deserving and Hell-bound sinners. It assures those who submit to its terms, "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isa. 1:18). As water to the parched, as a lifeboat to drowning seamen, the Gospel makes known an all-sufficient Saviour to the vilest creature on earth if he will throw down the weapons of rebellion and be reconciled to a holy God. The blood of Christ can cleanse the foulest—put your trust in that Fountain which has been "opened for sin and for uncleanness" and you shall prove its saving efficacy.

5. *The need of redeeming the time.* Delay is the height of folly when nothing but the frail thread of life prevents your dropping into Hell. That thread may snap at any moment, and then you are lost forever. "Today if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart." O you who are so headstrong, whose will is so obstinate, whose passions so desperate, know you not that you are preparing to dwell eternally in that place where peace and happiness are total strangers? You who are determined to have your fill of pleasure are but filling up the measure of your iniquities and preparing with all diligence to be fit companions with Satan in everlasting woe. Those who are now burning in their lusts shall soon burn in the Lake of Fire

unless they repent and seek God's pardoning grace. Then seek the Lord while He may be found, call upon Him while He is near. The damned are now bewailing the opportunities *they* neglected!

6. *The call to self-examination.* The Puritan Thomas Brookes states that in his day, “Some devout people caused the words 'Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?' (Isa. 33:14) to be written in letters of gold over their chimney pieces.” Well may each of us solemnly and seriously inquire, Shall *I* be among that Eternally doomed company? It is the part of wisdom to make sure of the foundation upon which our hope of deliverance rests. “There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Prov. 30:12). Self-deception is perilously easy, for we are ever ready to give ourselves the benefit of any doubt. Something more than outward religion is needed. Have I renounced my own righteousness as filthy rags? Am I trusting in Christ? Do I hate sin? Is inward depravity my greatest grief and burden? Am I daily seeking grace to deny self, mortify my lust, and please God?

7. *The praise due unto God from His people.* If I am a brand which has been plucked from the burning, what thanksgiving is due unto the Lord! If my blind eyes have been opened, if my hard heart has been softened, if my stubborn will has been broken, how deeply indebted am I unto *sovereign grace*! If I have been brought out of nature's darkness into God's marvellous light, made to see and mourn my waywardness and sinfulness and had placed within me a new principle or nature which causes me to hunger and thirst after righteousness and pant for communion with and conformity to the Lord, how immeasurably am I indebted to His distinguishing mercy! In such case must not thanksgiving be expressed in *thanksgiving*! If my feet have been turned Heavenward then I must act as a stranger and pilgrim here. If Christ has “delivered me from the wrath to come” (1 Thess. 1:10) then my chief concern should be for a greater love and likeness to Him.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

July, 1942

### **PASTORAL DIRECTIONS.**

To my dearly beloved friends, that small company to whom by the Providence of God, I have for some years past preached the everlasting Gospel. Grace, mercy, and peace unto you, from God our Father, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by the eternal Spirit—

It is now many years since we have been called to worship God's great and reverend name together: during which time He hath been exceeding good to us, manifesting His power in our weakness, and His love in our unworthiness. He hath declared His name to be recorded amongst us by His coming to us and blessing of us. Some of you have been convinced, some converted, some edified, and all (I hope) quickened and encouraged heavenwards. And not only yourselves, but through the grace of God many others have been born to Christ amongst us and more built up in the holy faith. O the many warm, sweet, and refreshing Sabbaths we have enjoyed together! And what shall we say to these things? or what shall we do? O let us bow down at the foot of God, and adore His infinitely, infinitely, infinitely free, rich, and powerful grace, ascribing all the glory to that alone, to which (I am sure) all is due!

God hath now called me aside from you, and not only from you, but He seems to be calling me out of His vineyard, yea, out of this world. I have long had a weak and infirm body and now God, in His wise and holy Providence, hath seen good to reduce me to a far lower and weaker state of body, my health being now utterly broken. Yet I must say God is exceeding good to me and deals in Fatherly tenderness with me. I have neither much sickness nor much pain; only my disease, according to its name, gradually consumes

me. Nor am I without some lucid intervals: God both lifts me up and casts me down, as He dealt with the Church of old.

Sometimes I am under some revivings which seems to give hopes of a return from the grave, others nothing but death seems to be in view. And in this dubious state I am waiting upon the will of God, which (I am sure) is holy, wise, and good, and which (I hope) shall be welcome to me, whether it be for life or death. Hitherto, through grace, death hath not been terrible to me; what it may be in its nearest approaches, I cannot tell; but I look to and rest upon Him who hath destroyed both death, and him that had the power of death.

And now only two things I beg of you: one is that you will give me room in your prayers while I am in the land of the living: and I desire you would beg of God these things for me. First, that all sin and guilt cleaving to me may be fully expiated and discharged through the blood of Christ. O beg both forgiveness and repentance for me, which (God knows) I greatly need! Second, that my will may be thoroughly resigned up unto the will of God, either for life or death. Third, that I may have much of God's presence with me and may always have good thoughts of Him and His dispensations towards me in all He doth or shall lay upon me.

Fourth, that if God should please to restore me, I may come out of this furnace purified and refined, as gold that is tried seven times and more fitted for my Master's service. Or if His pleasure is (which seems at present most probable) to put a period to my mortal life, that His love and the light of His countenance may shine upon me to sweeten the bitter pains of death to me; we cannot live comfortably without His love, much less can we die comfortably without it. That is my first request.

The other is that you will accept and embrace some plain but weighty counsels. God is my record that my heart's desire and prayer for you is, and has been, that you may be saved and in love to your salvation I leave these directions with you. 1. Above all things look well to and labour to make sure of an union with Christ, knowing assuredly that without union with Him all your religion is vain and ineffectual. 2. Take heed of too much addictedness to this world, as remembering, that if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him; and that the friendship of this world is enmity to God. 3. Dwell much within and be much conversant in heart-work, in studying the heart, searching the heart, cleansing the heart, keeping the heart, looking always upon it as the biggest cheat and impostor in the world, deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.

4. Take heed of splitting upon that fatal rock of self-deceit of which you have sometimes heard and upon which the greatest part of professors split and perish forever. 5. Set up and keep up the worship of God both in your families and closets. For the Lord's sake, let none of yours be prayerless families. 6. Always maintain a great honour and reverence for all God's ordinances and in an especial manner honour and sanctify His Sabbath. The Sabbath-day is your soul's market-day. O lose not your market! 7. Be universally honest and upright in your callings and your dealings in them. The fraudulent dealings of professors do much reproach to the Gospel.

8. Covet to seat yourselves under a sound, clear, searching, Gospel ministry, and keep mainly to the same

ministry; and the Lord guide you therein. 9. Labour that your profiting under the ministry may appear unto all men. It will be a dreadful thing to enjoy rich means and bring no fruit to perfection. O sirs! be fruitful Christians! 10. Expect farther trials and sufferings, and prepare for them. There is a dark and gloomy day coming, wherein (possibly) you will think it best with them that God shall have hid in the grave beforehand; but be not troubled, it will be short, and a glorious day will follow, a day wherein the church of God shall sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, a day wherein our dear Lord and Head shall reign gloriously.

11. Pray and long, long and pray, much and earnestly, for the coming of the day of God, for the coming of Christ's kingdom. *Thy kingdom come* is a petition which should be much upon our hearts. O do not rest in low things as to Divine appearances and manifestations both in the world and in your own souls! These counsels I leave with you out of that affection I bear to your salvation and our Lord's honour, as concerned in you. I will conclude all with that solemn and cordial profession to you, which Augustine often made to those to whom he was wont to preach, namely:

“It is the desire of my soul, that as we have been often crowded together to worship God in one earthly house, so we may all worship Him together forever in the heavenly house: and if we must never pray and preach, hear and mourn, together more on earth, yet we may love and sing, praise and admire together forever in Heaven; which that we may do, the God of peace (who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant), make us perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you and me that which is well-pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen and Amen.”—Last letter of E. Pearse to his flock.

N.B. Though the above was written nearly two centuries ago, it contains counsels for the Lord's people which are thoroughly pertinent to our own days. Many of the scattered flock are no longer in church fellowship with other saints and therefore there is the more reason why they need to attend with diligence unto the garden of their own souls. Re-read the closing paragraph and translate it into prayer and action.—A.W.P.

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August, 1942

### **DYING GRACE.**

My best beloved: I am now going from a prison to a palace. I have finished my work: I am now to receive my free-grace wages. I am going to Heaven, where are two of my children and leaving thee on the earth, where are three of my babes: those above need not my care but the three below need thine. It comforts me to think two of my children are in the bosom of Abraham and three of them will be in the arms and care of so godly a mother. I know thou art a woman of a sorrowful spirit, yet be comforted, God hath many mercies in store for thee; and the prayers of a dying husband for thee will not be lost. To my shame I speak it, I never prayed so much for thee at liberty as I have done in prison. I cannot write more, but I have a few practical counsels to leave with thee.

1. Keep under a sound orthodox and soul-searching ministry. Oh! there are many deceivers gone out into the world; but Christ's sheep know His voice and a stranger they will not follow. Attend on the ministry that teaches the way of God in truth and follow Solomon's advice: "Cease to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge" (Prov. 19:27). 2. Bring up my children in the knowledge and admonition of the Lord. The mother ought to be a teacher in the father's absence. "The prophecy that his *mother* taught him" (Prov. 31:1); and Timothy was instructed by his grandmother Lois and his mother Eunice (2 Tim. 1:5).

3. Pray in the family daily, that thy dwelling may be among the number of the families that do call on God.  
4. Labour for a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price (1 Peter 3:4). 5. Pore not

on the comforts thou wantest, but on the mercies thou hast. 6. Look rather at God's end in afflicting than at the measure and degree of thy afflictions. 7. Labour to clear up thy evidences for Heaven when God takes thee from the comforts of earth; that as thy sufferings do abound, thy consolations in Christ may much more abound (2 Cor. 1:5). 8. Though it is good to maintain a holy jealousy of the deceitfulness of thy heart, yet it is evil for thee to cherish fears and doubts about the truth of thy graces. If ever I had confidence touching the graces of another, I have confidence of grace in thee; I can say of thee, as Peter said of Silvanus, "This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand" (1 Peter 5:12). Oh! my dear soul, wherefore dost thou doubt? whose heart hath been upright, whose walkings have been holy, and I could venture my soul in thy soul's stead, such confidence have I of thee. 9. When thou findest thy heart secure, presumptuous and proud, then pore upon thy corruptions more than upon grace; but when thou findest thy heart doubting and unbelieving, then look on thy graces, not on thy infirmities. 10. Study the covenant of grace and the merits of Christ, and then be troubled if thou canst. Thou art interested in such a covenant that accepts purposes for performances, desires for deeds, sincerity for perfection, the righteousness of another, namely, that of Jesus Christ, as if it were thine own. Oh my love! rest, rest then, in the love of God, in the bosom of Christ!

11. Swallow up thy will in the will of God, it is a bitter cup we are to drink, but it is the cup our Father hath put into our hand. When Paul was to go to suffer at Jerusalem, the Christians could say, "The will of the Lord be done." 12. Rejoice in my joy; to mourn for me inordinately argues that thou either envy or suspect my happiness The joy of the Lord is my strength—O let it be thine also! Dear wife, farewell! I will call thee wife no more, I shall see thy face no more; yet I am not much troubled, for now I am going to meet the Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom I shall be eternally married. Thy dying, yet most affectionate friend till death, Christopher Love.

(The above is a letter written to his wife, from the Tower of London, on August 22, 1651, on the day of his execution).

N.B. What a striking illustration does the above supply of the marvel of Christian perseverance in the faith! Here is a man in the prime of life, an affectionate husband and father, innocent of any crime, cruelly cast into prison, to suffer death. Yet at the end (whatever there may or may not have been previously) there is no bitterness against his persecutors, no complaining at the injustice of his lot, no murmuring against God; but serenity of mind and joy of heart!

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### **GOOD ADVICE.**

From a master to his apprentice, when leaving his service and entering into life for himself. My young friend: As you were early committed to my care by your pious mother, whose death soon after left you a tender orphan; so I trust, in sincerity of heart, I have endeavoured to warn and counsel you against those evils which your inexperienced age was exposed to and directed and encouraged you in the principles of religion and of practices of virtue, which may lay the foundation for a happy and useful life; and I am now, with great affection, fulfilling the last part of my trust, by giving you some important counsels and cautions on your entrance on the stage of life wherein you will meet with temptations and difficulties you never yet experienced and will need all the assistance you can receive from God and man for your wise and happy conduct.

1. See that the foundation of religion is well laid in a sincere conversion, an entire and willing resignation of your soul to God as your sovereign Lord and Ruler and supreme and satisfying good; living by faith on Christ Jesus as the Saviour and hope of sinners, through whose mercy and mediation we are to seek for and receive every blessing from God for time and eternity. I trust you are not altogether a stranger to these dispositions of soul; but my advice is that you never rest satisfied until you have, in your own conscience, a full evidence of your sincerity herein. It is a dreadful thing for an immortal spirit to hang in a state of suspense by the slender thread of life between two such amazing extremes as an eternal Heaven or Hell. Satisfaction may be had: and it is worth all the pains, prayers, and vigilance you can use to obtain it.

2. As you are entering into a world wherein great variety of examples, methods of conduct, and manners in religion will be presented to you, some plausible, some pernicious, and many destructive—if you value your conscience or your comfort, make the sacred Word of God, which is to be the rule of your future judgment and of God's present providence over you, the invariable rule of your disposition and practice. Believe me, you will never find a more faithful counsellor, a more advantageous guide, or cordial, constant and comforting friend than in these sacred oracles of wisdom and truth if you closely study and practice them. Let no day therefore pass over without some serious perusal of it, join with earnest prayer to God for wisdom to understand it and power to conform to it. Study those inimitable rules of wisdom and prudence in the Proverbs of Solomon to direct your practice; the Psalms of David to inspire your devotion and the whole Word of God, especially the New Testament, to form your faith, your heart, your hope thereof. Particularly, treasure up in your mind some pertinent passages to every article of faith, commanded duty, and forbidden temper and practice—that your belief may be directed by the wisdom and your conscience formed by the authority of God in every scene of duty and temptation. “Bind them continually to thine heart, and tie them about thy neck; when thou goest, it shall lead thee; when thou sleepest, it shall keep thee; and when thou awakest, it shall talk with thee. For the commandment is a lamp, and the law is light; and reproofs of instruction are the way of life” (Prov. 6:21-23).

3. If you would enjoy the pleasures of a rational religious being let your actions not only be lawful for the matter of them but laudable as to the ends for which you performed them; that is, let it be the chief view and highest end in all you do *to please God* and glorify Him. It is the great prerogative of the Most High God and the proper homage that is due to Him for all His reasonable creatures, that, as He is their Creator and absolute owner, so He should be their chief end; and this end should be habitually intended by them in all their actions; and it is the great condescension of God and consolation of religion that He hath not only permitted us to enjoy the comforts and perform the offices of life but hath made it part of our duty so to do—so that there is not a minute of our life but we may be doing the work of God while we are serving ourselves and may convert the common actions of life into the services of religion by directing them to His glory. Study noble views, therefore, in all you do: devote yourself entirely to God and He will return you to yourself, wiser and better than He found you. Study to glorify Him by a life of holiness and beneficence and He will honour and bless you; so much as is done for God He will accept and reward, but what is done from low and selfish views is lost at your account: whatsoever therefore ye do, do it “as the servants of Christ . . . with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men” (Eph. 6:6, 7).

4. Be very watchful against an inordinate affection to the present world. Use it with sober cheerfulness and gratitude to Heaven, as far as is necessary to your present comfortable existence, but suffer it not to engage your heart. An earthly sensual mind is the basest perversion of the noble faculties of the soul of man, and the highest dishonour reflected on that glorious and good Being who created and redeemed it. The predominant degree of this evil and sordid disposition is ever inconsistent with sincerity in religion and the inordinate degrees of it in good men are the foundation of many sorrows, Divine rebukes and Providential afflictions. Very just is the saying of a worthy divine to this purpose: “Whatsoever we make an idol of will be a cross to us if we belong to Christ, and a curse to us if we do not.” The interest of the soul in sincere Christians more often suffers from the unhallowed love of mortal objects than from the love of unlawful ones. Watch carefully, therefore, over your affections and when any temporal good appears unusually delightful see that your inclinations to God do not grow feeble and languid thereby and your affections to

spiritual concerns more cold and indifferent. Remember, that to be carnally-minded is death, but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace.

5. Labour to procure and constantly to cherish a meek and humble spirit, which is of high estimation in the sight of God and men. This will make you easy to be pleased, difficult to be offended, calm and serene in every circumstance of life. This will cause you to be courteous and affable to inferiors, respectful to superiors and procure honour and esteem from others, far beyond all the assuming airs of pride and arrogance and self-applause. Especially let this disposition be cherished in all your religious concerns: a condescending God, a humble Redeemer, and a proud sinner are the most astonishing scenes that can present themselves to the mind of man. Labour to be sensible how little knowledge and goodness you possess compared with the rule of your duty and the attainments of others, and never measure yourself but by your superiors in wisdom and goodness. Expect to excite your gratitude to Heaven for its great favours to your soul.

6. Watch over the natural appetites of the body: let not those senses which were designed to administer innocent pleasures become incentives to sin. The sensitive affections have so far overpowered reason and conscience in man that the Scripture can find no word more fit to describe his fallen state by than *flesh*; and believe me, it requires all the assistance that piety and reason can afford to keep them in due subordination. Be chaste and virtuous, not only in conversation and behaviour but in the dispositions of your mind; indulge no lascivious thoughts or looks and run not unnecessarily into temptations thereunto: you know how great a flame the fire of lust indulged may kindle. Observe the injunctions which our Lord and Saviour has given concerning the government of the eyes (see Matt. 5:28), and imitate the wise example of Job 31:1 and David (Psa. 119:37) relating thereunto. Be also sober and temperate in the use of diet and drink: every degree is excessive therein which renders you indisposed to action and exercise of body and mind; particularly let no company engage you to exceed the bounds of reason herein—a peremptory refusal or two at first will ever free you from their solicitations—but easy compliance will encourage their repeated assaults upon your innocence and virtue.

7. Be very cautious in your choice of company and friends for we insensibly grow like unto those with whom we frequently and familiarly converse. Be rude and uncivil to none but intimate only with a few and let those few be well-chosen, such as you may improve by in virtue and goodness; especially let this be attended to in the choice of a relation through life. Believe it that love is usually a blind passion, erroneously mistaking both persons and things; and therefore if you would consult your true happiness, never enter into an agreement with this nature without first consulting your elder and judicious friends, whose knowledge of human nature is greater and their affections more cool and therefore fitted to form a truer judgment.

I cannot conclude this letter of advice without recommending to you a benevolent heart and useful and charitable life as the noblest disposition and highest enjoyment the present state can afford. Consider yourself as a member of the universe, whose proper disposition is to feel the sorrow and rejoice in the happiness of all the beings that surround you: and permit me to point out that the sensualist, the covetous, the ambitious, in the highest gratification of their desires, never felt a joy comparable to that of doing good. Watch therefore against a contracted selfish spirit as an high injury to yourself, and be diligent,

prudent and frugal in all your economy that you may have the capacity of being a great blessing to others. Especially endeavour to promote their best interests, whereby you may be an everlasting blessing unto them.

That the God of all grace may inspire your heart with heavenly wisdom, preserve you from the evils of life, grant you prosperity and make you a blessing in every relation thereof; give you more to feel the power and the pleasures of godliness in this world and in due time grant you to receive the rewards of it in a better is the hearty prayer and desire of your sincere friend and affectionate master—November, 1752.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1942

### GODLY COUNSEL

Dear Son: We are all well here, thanks be to God; the Divine Providence watching about our tabernacle and compassing us about with favour as with a shield. Our great inquiry is, What shall we render? Alas, our renderings are nothing to our receivings; we are like the barren field on which much cost is bestowed but the crop is not accordingly. Our heavenly Father is loading us with His benefits and we are loading Him with our sins, grieving Him that comforts us; and how long, how long shall it be so? O that it might be otherwise! that our mercies might be as on to the wheels, to make us so much the more active and lively in our Master's work. There may a day come when it will cost dear to be honest; but, after all, fear God and keep His commandments is the whole of man. I therefore commend it to you and you to God, who is a shield and buckler to them that fear Him.

We are well, but in daily expectation of that which we are born and born again to, and that is, trouble in this world, yet rejoicing in hope of the glory of God, which we are reaching after and pressing towards, as we trust you are also. Where you are, you see more of the glittering vanities of this world in a day than we here do in an age and are grown more and more in love with them or dead and dying to them; I hope dead and dying to them, for they are poor things and perish in the using. Be sincere and humble and choice in your company, always either getting good or doing good.

Your acquaintance, I doubt not, increaseth abroad and accordingly your watch must be, for by that oftentimes, ere we are aware, we are ensnared. "He that walketh with wise men shall be wise." The farther

progress you make in your studies, you will find them the easier: it is so with religion, the worst is at the first. It is like the picture that frowned at first entrance but afterwards smiles and looks pleasant. Your improvement is our joy. Be sincere and serious, clothed with humility, always abounding in the work of the Lord; and when you have done all, be saying, "I am an unprofitable servant."

It was a good advice of the moral philosopher, In your converse with men, *distrust*; but I must add, In everything towards God, *believe*. Expect temptation and a snare at every turn and walk accordingly. We have a good cause, a vanquished enemy; a good second, an extraordinary joy; for he that overcomes need not desire to be more happy than the second and third chapters of the Revelation speaks him to be. I would have you redeem time, for, hearing the Word in season and out of season, your other studies will prosper never the worse, especially if you could return immediately from it to the closet again, without cooling diversions by the way.

See your need of Christ more and more and live upon Him; no life like it, so sweet, so safe. We cannot be discharged from the guilt of any evil we do without His merit to satisfy; we cannot move in the performance of any good required without His Spirit and grace to assist and enable for it; and when we have done all, that all is nothing without His mediation and intercession to make it acceptable; so that every day, in everything, He is all in all. Though you are at a distance from us now, we rejoice in the good hope of meeting again in the land of the living, that is, on earth, if God see good; however, in Heaven which is the true land of the living, and is best of all. The Lord God everlasting be your Sun and Shield in all your ways; see time hasting away apace toward eternity and the Judge even at the door, and work accordingly; wherever you are, alone or in company, be always either sowing or reaping.

As for me, I make no other reckoning but that the time of my departure is at hand and what trouble I may meet with before, I know not, the will of the Lord be done: one of my chief desires is that no iniquity of mine be laid up for you. Be careful of your health, but especially neglect not the main matter. The soul is the man: if that do well all is well. Worship God in the spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh. Expect trouble in this world and prepare for it; expect happiness in the other world and walk worthy of it unto all pleasing.

A good book is a good companion at anytime, but especially a good God, who is always ready to hold communion with those that desire and seek communion with Him. Keep low and humble in your thoughts and opinion of yourself; but aim high in your desires and expectations, even as high as the kingdom of Heaven itself and resolve to take up with nothing short of it. The Lord guide you in all your ways and go in and out before you, and preserve you blameless to His heavenly kingdom. Your loving father, Philip Henry.

The above was written to his son, Matthew Henry, the famous commentator.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1942

### CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

The title of this article will probably suggest to most of our readers that we shall treat therein exclusively with the future condition of the believer's body. Really it is deplorable that such a circumscribed view should obtain so widely in this twentieth century—that “resurrection” should connote nothing more than physical resuscitation. Surely little more than a glance at the Epistles is needed to discover that in the New Testament “death” and “life” are used with a much broader and higher signification than merely physical—that “resurrection” is connected with other things than the body—that it has a present, yea a past, bearing upon the Christian as well as a future, that it has a forensic application as well as a literal. Believers are greatly the losers if they confine the resurrection to a mere emergence from the grave. The New Testament treats first of the Christian's *legal* or representative resurrection; second of his *spiritual* or regenerative one and finally of his *corporeal*. As the first is now so little apprehended by God's people we shall devote most space to it.

Resurrection presupposes death and to understand what death is we must go back to the Fall. “In Adam all die” (1 Cor. 15:22): that is the basic fact, death being the wages of sin, the penalty of the broken law (Rom. 5:12). In Adam all died: what is meant by that? This: their relationship with God was radically altered and they experienced a fearful change in themselves. More specifically: first, they ceased to be well-pleasing in the sight of their Maker, they were no longer favourably regarded by Him. Positively, they fell under His curse and became “the children of wrath.” Second, they forfeited the Holy Spirit, became “alienated from the life of God” (Eph. 4:18). His image and likeness in them was greatly marred,

communion with Him was severed. Third, corruption entered their bodies, the seeds of mortality obtained lodgment, disease invaded their earthly tabernacles. And, unless they are recovered from these calamities the “second death” or everlasting separation from God in endless torment in the Lake of Fire, will be the final consummation of that death which is the wages of sin.

In the sovereign grace of God it pleased Him that His chosen people should be recovered from those dreadful calamities and be spared the second death, not by revoking His sentence nor by modifying its severity but by exacting the same upon a sinless Sponsor and Substitute so that legally they died in and with Him. Christ came to earth as the Head and Representative of His people. His obedience unto death was no mere vague expedient through which mercy may be shown to all who choose to take advantage of it. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep: from Bethlehem to Calvary He was acting and suffering for them. His obedience in all its perfections was theirs, just as their sin in all its aggravations was made His by imputation. As in Adam all the elect died, so also in Christ they all died. All the condemnation under which they lay was executed upon them in Christ. In Him they have met and satisfied every claim of Divine justice, so that “there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:1).

In Romans 5:14 it is affirmed that Adam was “the figure of Him that was to come,” upon which it has been well remarked: “These are the two men, type and Antitype, in whom human history centers. Their relations to the one and to the other ultimately divide all men into two classes, each receiving nature and destiny from its head. All the individuals who comprise either class have been so represented by these heads that it has been justly said, 'there have been but two men in the world and two facts in human history.' The two men are Adam and Christ; the two facts are the disobedience of the former and the obedience of the latter by which many are made righteous. By the former came ruin, by the latter came redemption; and neither ruin nor redemption can be Scripturally apprehended except as it is seen to be accomplished by these representatives and except as we apprehend the relationships expressed by being 'in Adam' or 'in Christ' ” (James Inglis, 1871).

What has been just quoted above is only another way of saying that God has dealt with men throughout on the principle of one for many: true alike in the relations of nature and in the relations of grace—the many are included and represented by the one (see Rom. 5:18, 19). In the sight of God, in the accounting of His Law, every Christian has died twice—in Adam and in Christ, the former of which is more readily understood by the believer than is the other. Because Christ was their federal Head, what He did and suffered was regarded by God as His people doing and suffering. Since they were in Christ by federal constitution His death was their death, they bearing the wages of sin in the Person of their Surety. Christians could not have more really suffered the penalty than if they had been personally cast into Hell. The broken Law can no longer denounce any believer, for in the Person of Christ he has suffered its vengeance and from its threatening he can claim complete exemption by pointing to the Surety in whom he has already died.

In view of what has been pointed out above Christian readers should now have less difficulty in perceiving the force of that exhortation, “reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin” (Rom. 6:11), though for a clearer and fuller understanding thereof it will be necessary for us to give a brief exposition of its

context. The chapter opens with two questions. First, “What shall we say then?” that is, what inference shall we draw from the blessed doctrine propounded in Romans 4 and 5? Second, “Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?” In that query the Apostle anticipates an objection: “If the ungodly are justified by faith without any works of their own and if where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded (5:20), then may we not continue sinning without restraint so that grace may more and more abound?” Such has ever been the favourite, though unfounded objection, made by opposers of the Gospel. In what follows the Apostle shows that such is the believer's Union with Christ that his living in sin would be as great a contradiction in terms as to speak of a living corpse or a holy degenerate. Union with Christ is the source of purity and not of uncleanness.

“God forbid, How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?” (Rom. 6:2). This “God forbid” is Paul's usual mode of expressing denial and abhorrence. We that are “dead to sin” is literally “that died to sin,” the Greek denoting a specific act of our past history. Formerly Christians were dead *in* sin, now they are dead *to* it, delivered *from* it. To many this may seem a startling statement for they are painfully conscious that sin is very much alive in them. Then exactly what is the meaning of this expression? Certainly it does not signify that Christians are dead to the *power* of sin—this verse speaks not of an exceptional attainment of a favoured and matured few, but of a fact which is true of all believers alike. It should also be carefully noted that this verse is in the form of a doctrinal statement and not an exhortation setting forth an experience to which we should aspire and after which we should strive. Nor is it something which God promises to make good unto us in the future: it is affirmed as an *accomplished fact*. The same may be remarked of all parallel passages containing similar statements.

“We that died to sin.” If we carry with us into Romans 6 the truth set forth in the representative characters of the two Adams in the previous chapter, we have the key for interpreting the expressions used in this. The suretyship of Christ and the federal nature of His atonement as the act of one for the many is brought forward into Romans 6, only with this difference: here *we* are described as doing what our Representative did; that is, the one corporate act is described from our sharing in its transaction. As we were condemned to death in the first Adam, so we endured the penalty in the last Adam. The judgment which came upon us to condemnation was once and for all executed, for “we died to sin” in the one man Christ Jesus. And how shall we live any longer therein? His first answer is we shall not, we cannot, for in the constitution which God appointed we are one with Christ and having in Him suffered the penalty of the Law we died to the guilt of sin, to its condemnation, to its power to separate us from God. “Died to sin” has no reference to any *change* wrought within Christians but relates only to their *standing* before God because of their oneness with Christ.

The force of “died to sin” is made unmistakably manifest in the verses that follow. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we *were* (not “are”) buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (vv. 3, 4). It is quite needless for our present purpose to enter into a critical discussion upon the nature of the “baptism” here alluded to, whether the baptism by the Spirit which effectually joins to the Lord (1 Cor. 12:13) or water baptism to symbolize our oneness with Christ in His death—suffice it now to point out that in Scripture baptism always signifies the removing of its subject out of one condition, relation or standing, into another. Here it is affirmed that all

believers have been taken out of the first Adam into Christ and were “baptized into His death.”

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5). This amplifies the preceding statement, for in this and the next two verses the Apostle shows that such is the nature of the Christian's *union* with Christ that if he is one with Him in His death he must be equally so in His resurrection. We agree with Charles Hodge that the “we shall be” does not express futurity: “the reference is not to what is to happen hereafter, but to the certainty of sequence or causal connection: if the one thing happens, the other shall certainly follow.” The opening “For if” indicates that the Apostle is showing what logically and inevitably follows from his previous statements. The “planted together” signifies the closest union of any kind, as being incorporated or joined with. The “likeness of His resurrection” does not here (as in Phil. 3:21) signify that there is an analogy between Christ's resurrection body and that of believers, but that they were as truly one with Him when He rose from the dead as when He died on the tree.

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him” (Rom. 6:6), or as it may be more literally and tersely rendered “our old man was co-crucified.” Here we have a direct answer to the question when and how Christians “died to sin.” It was when Christ was crucified. Here, too, is conclusive proof that this death to sin is not a subjective one but an objective and historical fact. There is nothing here which savours of monkish mortification or self-mutilation, for of all forms of death, crucifixion is the most impossible for one to inflict upon himself. When Paul declared, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), or as the Greek signifies and as the R.V. and Bagster's Interlinear renders it, “I have been crucified with Christ,” he gave utterance to that which is equally true of all genuine Christians—it was a past transaction and not a process now being experienced. It is also worthy of note that the verb “was crucified” in verse 5 is in the passive voice, denoting that it was accomplished wholly outside of themselves in the Person of their Head.

It is important that we define aright “our old man,” especially since the views of the older and best writers were confused thereon. Even Hodge and Haldane understood by this expression “our carnal” and “our old nature”—their experience should have taught them better, for neither the work of Christ *for* them nor the work of the Spirit *in* them has effected any change in the “flesh” or sinful nature that we all inherit from Adam. Unless we distinguish sharply between the *person* and his *nature*—as the Apostle does so emphatically in “I myself,” etc. (Rom. 7:25)—we are bound to err. That distinction was maintained and broadly asserted by Paul in another passage where he speaks of “the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22). The “old man,” then, is our old personality or standing in Adam, as may be seen yet further from the “body of sin” being distinguished from it in this very verse.

“That the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). In those words is expressed the design of our old man being crucified with Christ: it is not that at some later date the body of sin will be destroyed and that we shall be delivered from serving sin but that this purpose *was* accomplished at Calvary. The “body of sin” is synonymous with “the body of this death” in Romans 7:24, the reference being not to our physical body but to the corruptions of the old man. The “flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24) is termed a “body” because it is viewed as an organized entity—in Colossians 3:5 allusion is made to its “members.” In what sense was it “destroyed”? *Judicially*. It was not merely weakened, nor was it annihilated. The Greek word may be rendered “annulled.” It is used again in

Hebrews 2:14 of the Devil: that tyrant has been dethroned, his power or right by virtue of conquest (at the Fall) has been rendered void. Consequently Christians are delivered from the service or slavery of sin. Death cancels all obligations. The believer is “the Lord's freeman” (1 Cor. 7:22).

“For He that died hath been justified from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Observe the change in number here: it is no longer “we” as in each of the preceding verses, but “He.” The reference is to Christ the Head, just as the “He” in Romans 6:10 also contemplates Him. Again the tense is in the aorist and should be rendered (as Bagster's Interlinear) “has been justified.” That the marginal “justified” is to be used rather than “freed” is clear from the fact that the Greek word occurs fifteen times in this Epistle and twenty-five times in other parts of the New Testament and excepting this verse and one other where it is translated “righteous” it is uniformly rendered “justified.” Nor should we deem such a statement strange or difficult because it is made of Christ, for to be “justified” refers not to any subjective change or work, being strictly a legal term, a judicial pronouncement, meaning to “declare righteous.” “In justification, which is a judicial and irrevocable sentence pronounced by God there are two parts: the one includes absolution from the guilt of the breach of the law: the other, the possession of that obedience to its precepts which the law demands. These being inseparable, they are both included in the expression 'justified from sin' ” (Robert Haldane).

“For He that died hath been justified from sin.” Those words express most forcibly the reality of Christ's substitution for His people and testify to the completeness of their representation by Him. He died in their place and put away sin, their sin—their sin imputed to and borne by Him in the sacrifice of Himself. And assuredly He who was their Sin-bearer must be justified from sin if His death achieved its end. When the Lord Jesus Christ stood in Herod's judgment hall and was about to be brutally dealt with by them, when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked out the hair, He consoled Himself thus: “For the Lord God will help Me . . . He is near that *justifieth Me*” (Isa. 50:6-8). We know that His expectation was realized—“God was manifest in flesh, justified in spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16). Both Pilate and the centurion who crucified Him could justify Him from man's accusations but because He had taken our guilt and was made sin for us, so from our sin and guilt He could only be justified through the death which atoned for them. His justification could be declared by none other than the One to whom He offered Himself a propitiation. God's raising Him from the dead demonstrated that Christ was “justified from sin.”

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:8). It should be clear to all who have followed closely our exposition above that the resurrection here postulated is not a subjective one as is regeneration, nor is it a promise of bodily triumph over the grave, though both of these follow as necessary *consequences*. Rather is the life here mentioned an *objective* one, something outside of ourselves. Three details are to be carefully noted. First, as the “died with Christ” is an external and legal transaction and not an inward experience, so also is the “live with Him.” Second, the plural pronoun connotes that this predication is made of all those whom Christ represented: it is a *corporate* life and not merely individual. Third, it is not a life “through” Christ, derived from Him, but by virtue of our identification and judicial oneness “*with Him*.” When Christ was made alive from the dead all the elect rose with Him. When the Head was “justified from sin” so were all His members (though application thereof is not made till they believe: Acts 13:39). The righteousness of Christ secures “justification *of life*” (Rom. 5:18).

It seems a pity we should now have to break off in the middle of our exposition of this most interesting and important passage, but the exhaustion of present space obliges us to do so: however we will resume (D.V.) in the following issue at the point where we here leave off. Meanwhile it is pertinent to ask, How far does this argument of the Apostle's answer the question raised in verse 1? Does the doctrinal affirmation of the believer's oneness with Christ in His death and resurrection effectually dispose of the practical objection that justification by grace through faith without any works of ours tends to moral laxity and encourages a course of sinning? Answer, we frankly aver that so far from such a reply satisfying the natural man, it will appear "foolishness" unto him. Yet it is far otherwise with the spiritual mind, so we hope to show in the sequel. Motives inspire the believer which have no effect upon the unbeliever. Arguments and incentives move the regenerate which do not and cannot affect the unregenerate.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1942

### CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

Resuming at the point where we left off in last month, the Apostle next declares, “Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more, death hath no more dominion over Him” (Rom. 6:9). First let us point out this opening “knowing that” clearly fixes the meaning of “knowing this” in verse 6 and shows that the commentators quite missed the point there. How, in what manner, do Christians know that death has no more dominion over Christ? Answer, solely by the testimony of God. It is not by virtue of any inward experience of which they are the subjects but by the infallible declarations of the Word of Truth. In like manner, it is by the witness of Holy Writ and by that alone, believers know their old man was crucified with Christ—that their standing in Adam then came to an end before God. “We *know* that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14). Why is love for the brethren an infallible evidence and assurance of regeneration? Because God says so, because He declares it to be such.

“Knowing that Christ being raised from the dead, dieth no more; death hath no more dominion over Him” (Rom. 6:9). This is both unspeakably solemn and inexpressibly blessed. The inescapable implication of these words is that death once had “dominion over” Christ. He was its lawful captive because He took the place of His guilty people and bore their sins. But having received sin's wages in full, having completely discharged the awful debt of His people, the Law had no further claim upon Him—its penalty had been enforced, justice was satisfied. Christ can die no more: “whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it *was not possible* that He should be holden of it” (Acts 2:24). A truly remarkable word is

that: righteousness had been outraged if the sepulcher continued to hold the One who had earned a complete discharge from death's exactions. The object of His voluntary death having been accomplished, Christ lives forever more. How emphatically, then, does this verse intimate that Christ has “made an end of (the) sin” of His people (Dan. 9:24)!

“For in that He died, He died unto sin once but in that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (Rom. 6:10). This is explanatory of that which immediately precedes. Death derives its “dominion” from the reigning power or authority of sin, and when sin is destroyed its dominion ceases. Christ not only died “for sin” (Rom. 8:3) but “unto sin.” Sin had “reigned unto death” (Rom. 5:21), and having put Himself in the place of sinners, Christ came under the legal sway or dominion of sin—the power which it derived from the Law. But by expiating sin Christ fully satisfied the Law and therefore the Law supplies no more “strength” to sin (1 Cor. 15:56) to reign over Him unto death. Such was the efficacy of His sacrifice that it need not be repeated (Heb. 7:27; 10:10), for by it He “finished transgression” (Dan. 9:24). The Law having no further penalty to inflict, Christ is forever beyond the reach of death. The death of Christ was the death of death as the wages of sin, not only for Himself as the mediator but for all those on whose behalf He transacted.

“In that He liveth, He liveth unto God.” There are two separate things here, and unless we distinguish carefully between them we shall miss the principal point of this passage. “In that He liveth” concerns the judicial side of things—“He liveth unto God” the practical. The breaking of the Law involves death, the keeping of it *life*. The commandment was “unto life” (Rom. 7:10); “the man which doeth these things shall live by them” (10:5) was the original promise of the Law. The Divine Law is vested with sanctions: a penalty for disobedience, a *reward* for perfect obedience. Perhaps we can better grasp the force of these terms by remembering that the “death” and the “life” which is the sentence of the Law, is first and foremost a *relationship*—a relationship to God involving a state of experience corresponding therewith. When Adam died he forfeited God's favourable regard and fell under His curse. When Christ had received the wages of sin, because He had previously rendered unto the Law a perfect obedience, He was entitled to God's favourable regard and worthy of His blessing. “In His *favour* is *life*” (Psa. 30:5)—the two things are inseparable.

When God raised our Surety from the dead it was not an act of grace or mercy unto Him but one of bare *justice*, such as the Law required. “Righteousness delivereth from death” (Prov. 10:2) and Christ was the Righteous One. Concerning Him it is written, “He asked life of Thee” and the Father gave Him, “length of days, forever and ever” (Psa. 21:4). He Himself declared, “I have set the LORD always before Me . . . therefore My heart is glad . . . My flesh also shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hell, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life” (Psa. 16:8-11). When Christ asks it is not for a favour, but a suing of His legitimate right. “Ask of Me,” says God, “and I shall give Thee the heathen for Thine inheritance and the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession” (Psa. 2:8)—because He had *purchased* them. “Father I *will* (not “request”) that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am” (John 17:24)—because such is His *due*. Thus it was when He asked for “life.”

“He liveth” (Rom. 6:10). Is that a reference to the reunion of spirit and soul and body in the person of Christ and His emerging from the sepulcher? No, rather does it contemplate the cause and ground thereof.

The grave could not retain the One upon whom the Law announced the reward of “life.” Or, to express the same idea in more personal yet equivalent terms, the Father could not leave in the disembodied (and so, imperfect) state, the One on whom He now looked with complacency. Christ had gloriously overcome sin and death: not only so, He had magnified the Law and made it honourable by His obedience to it. Therefore God was honour-bound to own Him as His righteous Servant. As such He was entitled to and become possessed of a life forever beyond the reach of sin and death. That “life” of Christ is “eternal life” because it is based on and is the reward of the “everlasting righteousness” which He brought in (Dan. 9:24). Life (instated to the approbation of God) is as truly the reward of righteousness as death (the judicial disapprobation of God) is the penalty of sin. “He liveth unto God” is the consequence of the former.

“In that He liveth, He liveth unto God” (Rom. 6:10). This is predicated of Christ not as a private person, but as the Head of His people. It was as their Representative He had satisfied both the precept and the penalty of the Law. And representation involves *identification*: if the One acted on behalf of the many, it is equally true that the many acted in the One. Christ and the Church together form one body and God never views the one apart from the other. Accordingly we read, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us *together* with Christ” (Eph. 2:4, 5). The reference there is not to regeneration (though it involves and requires it), for it is not an individual experience (as the new birth is ) but a *corporate* transaction which is in view. The following words prove this: “and hath raised us up *together* and made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ” (v. 6). The life to which the Law pronounced Christ entitled is also conferred upon all His people.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God in Jesus Christ our Lord” (Rom. 6:11). “Likewise”: just as Christ died unto sin—unto its penalty—and now lives unto God in the enjoyment of the Law's reward, so regard yourselves as participants of the same. “Reckon ye”: what is true in itself, make true in your convictions and consciousness. “Reckon” does not mean “suppose” or “fancy yourselves” to be something you are not. It is not try and persuade yourselves to be “dead indeed unto sin,” but because God declares you *are* so, set to your seal that He is true—receive His testimony without doubting. In Romans 2:26 the word for “reckon” is rendered “counted,” that is, “accounted.” In 3:28 “conclude” and in 2:3 “thinkest.” Christians are to think of themselves as God has described them in His Word, namely, as *one with Christ*, as the actual participants of His death and of His life; to conclude themselves to be what God affirms they are.

In point of truth Christians are partakers legally of Christ's death and life and therefore they should so regard themselves: this is not a fiction but a *fact*. They are therefore enjoined to look upon themselves as God sees them: forever freed from the penalty and doom of sin, entitled to and possessors of the Law's reward. When Abram was bidden to offer up his beloved Isaac, he obeyed, “*accounting* that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead” (Heb. 11:19): the word for “reckon” in Romans 6:11 is here rendered “accounting,” and it was a true accounting. Believers are “dead to sin,” not to its power, not to its activities within them but to its guilt and wages. They are so because in the Person of their Substitute they have already borne and exhausted its penalty. Furthermore, they live in Christ and stand before God in all His acceptableness. In God's sight they are completely justified, spotlessly righteous. In God's reckoning they have passed out of death into the realm of life and *faith* is to lay hold of God's testimony thereto.

“Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin but alive unto God in Jesus Christ” (Rom. 6:11). Here is the *initial resurrection*, the foundation of the spiritual (regeneration) and the bodily. And it is one of which we are to enjoy the blessedness and comfort even now. This verse is in the form of a positive command. It is the Christian's duty as well as privilege to be fully assured of his identification with and participation in all that Christ is and has done. This is not a matter of feeling but of faith. It is the will of God that His children should be convinced of their interest in Christ and perfect standing before Him. So far from its being presumptuous for them to do so, it is rank *disobedience* not to! And this command is binding upon all believers alike. This injunction to “reckon,” to believe and account, is not made only unto those of strong faith and deep experience, but to babes in Christ equally as to full-grown Christians. We are to view ourselves as *God* sees us—dead to sin, alive unto Him in Christ.

Now Christians are not only to reckon themselves to be what God declares they are as to their standing or status before Him but are to regulate their lives and order their conduct accordingly. Hence we find the Apostle immediately adds, “Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. Neither yield your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those that are alive from the dead” (vv. 12, 13). That exhortation is founded upon and flows from all that has been before us. The doctrinal *fact* is we died to sin in Christ; the practical *lesson* is, live not in subjection to the sin which slew Him. Legal union with Christ calls for practical holiness, His wondrous love supplying the motive power. Live agreeably to the good news announced by the Gospel. Let your behaviour correspond to your standing. Christians “*are* alive unto God,” then let them abandon all which characterized them in their unregenerate state. Let your judicial identification with Christ furnish the motive for practical conformity to Him. Since you are “alive unto God,” do all you do for His glory.

A similar exhortation, based upon the same doctrinal fact, is found in Colossians 3:1-5. “If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God” (v. 1). A better rendering would be, “Since then ye were raised with Christ.” The “if” of the A.V. is not designed to express a doubt, but draws an inference. Because the Colossian saints *were* raised with their Surety: upon that is based the “seek those things which are above.” It is the same form of speech as when it is said, “If you are citizens of the country, you ought to obey the laws of the country.” No doubt or uncertainty is expressed, any more than in the “if” of John 14:3. Since, then, you were raised with Christ: that is, when He was raised, His resurrection as the Head of His Church being virtually the resurrection of all His people.

That the resurrection here referred to cannot be a *moral* one—a raising of the thoughts, desires and affections of believers—is evident from the exhortation which follows. The Apostle would not say, since then you are heavenly minded, be heavenly minded, but since you were really raised with Christ, then live accordingly. “Seek those things which are above where Christ is seated at the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1)—if you are united to Him, it becomes you to be tending to Him—and He is in Heaven, and not upon earth. “For,” continues the Apostle, “ye are dead and your life is hid with Christ in God.” It is to be regretted that the present tense “ye are dead” is found in our version, for it not only contradicts the previous verse but hides from the reader the scope and meaning of the whole passage. They “died” when Christ died, as they rose with Him, and now their life is hidden with Him in God, to be openly manifested one day for, “When He who is our life shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory” (v. 4).

Thus continual and eternal is the believer's union with the Lord. He is so joined to Christ, so truly a member of His body both legally and vitally, that what is true of Christ is true of him also. The whole merit and virtue of Christ's work passes over to him as his present and rightful heritage. The Lord Jesus has passed through death and resurrection in triumph to the skies and His triumph is equally the triumph of His people. The anchor of the soul which is the security of the saints “entereth into that within the veil, whither the Forerunner is *for us* entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:19, 20). Christ has entered Heaven in our name, on our behalf. One by one His purchased people are passing there and when they are all gathered then shall the opened heavens reveal their oneness with Christ. What a glorious consummation to His work—the Bridegroom and the Bride one in heavenly glory! This is a future thing in actuality but faith makes it present and real. It is faith which regards our union with Christ in His death and resurrection as effectually our own.

In Romans, as we have seen, the death of Christ is presented as the Christian's death unto *sin*, but in Colossians 3 that death is seen separating him from the *world*. Christ tabernacled on earth but at the grave His earthly life ended. He passed through death and resurrection away from this terrestrial sphere into a new and heavenly country where He now lives and reigns. The earth as well as its inhabitants lie under the curse. The world is a Divinely condemned place. Christ could not stay here and His people cannot. They have been delivered “from this present evil world” (Gal. 1:4) as well as from their sins. Even now their “conversation (citizenship) is in Heaven” (Phil. 3:20) and Heaven is their Home. The more faith lays hold of that fact, the more will they realize that they are “strangers and pilgrims” (1 Peter 2:11) in this scene. And the more their affections are set upon things above, the more of Heaven will they enjoy in their souls and not only will the Holy Spirit be witnessing with their spirit—that they are sons of God—but He will grant them increased earnestness and foretastes of heavenly blessedness.

Here, then, is the real secret of heavenly-mindedness: not through a forced aversion from the world while we are yet in love with it, not by the power of ecclesiastical vows or monastic mortifications, nor the proud rigour of the Pharisee or the sulky seclusion of the ascetic, but by *faith*—by a faith which has attained to heavenly things and which drops the earthly because they are so poor and perishing. It is life drawing us away from death, riches from poverty, celestial rest and blessing from worldly confusion and disorder. “This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4). It has always been so. It was so with the early Christians in their bitter persecution: “ye took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have *in Heaven* a better and an enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34). It was so when the Puritans scorned the honors and wealth of this world. It is so still. Why covet material riches when God is saying to us, All things in Christ are yours? Why lust after mundane dignity when called by God His *sons*, made His kings and priests forevermore? Every reason have we to set our affection upon things above.

Thus we see again the true relation of sound doctrine and godly practice—the effect which the former should produce upon the latter—and which it does produce when “mixed with *faith*.” Where doctrine is only received intellectually it has no influence on the life, but when laid hold of by a living faith it acts as a powerful dynamic upon the affections and issues in a godly walk.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

“Life” and “death,” “death” and “life,” sum up the Christian's history: the former terms his standing and state in Adam; the latter, his standing and state in Christ. First he had life in Adam, and then he died in him. Second, he died with Christ, and is now alive in Him. His “death” in Adam affected first his standing before God—he became “alienated from His life” (Eph. 4:18) and fell under His wrath (Eph. 2:3). Second, his state was made to correspond with his standing: he became depraved and corrupt, devoid of any spiritual life in his soul. Third, the outcome of this is that his body returns to the dust. Contrariwise, having died to sin with Christ, the believer is now “alive unto God in Him” (Rom. 6:11). The Christian has first a *legal* resurrection, which concerns his standing: he is reconciled to God (Rom. 5:10), instated into His favour and blessing (Gal. 3:13, 14). Second, and because of the former, the Christian's state is brought into accord with his standing—a new nature, spiritual life is communicated to his soul—previously he was in Christ, now Christ is in him. The outcome of this is that his body will yet be raised in glory.

Above we have employed the expression “legal resurrection.” As this will be a term new to most of our readers, a word or two by way of definition and explanation are called for. Legal resurrection is the pronouncement of the Law, “life” being its reward to those who have fulfilled its requirements. Legal death is the Law's capital-sentence. A man becomes legally dead the moment punishment is pronounced by the judge, though usually there is an interval of a few weeks before actual execution takes place. During that interval he could not marry, nor cast a vote, or be sued for any new debt he then contracted; any will made by him in that period would be invalid, because in the sight of the law he no longer exists.

Legal death is a falling under the curse. Contrariwise, the “life” which the Law pronounces and bestows upon those whom it rewards is one of unmixed blessing—“the blessing, even *life* for evermore” (Psa. 133:3). Now just as the murderer is legally “dead” for some weeks before he is hanged or electrocuted, so the people of God received legal or primal “life” in Christ long before they are regenerated.

The Christian has “life” in Christ before he has life *from* Him. In Christ His people have met every claim of Divine justice, consequently there is now “no condemnation to them” (Rom. 8:1). Or, to state the same in its positive form: they are “made (legally constituted, as in the former clause) the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). As the inexorable doom of sin followed and rested upon all who were in Adam when he fell, so the inevitable reward of righteousness followed and rests upon all who are in Christ (Rom. 5:21). The atonement of the Lord Jesus was no mere expedient for getting rid of the doom of sin, but a satisfaction made unto God which met every requirement of His Law, entitling Him to its reward, and as a consequence thereof believers are made sharers of that “life” in which their Head came up from the grave, where all their sins were buried. For if it is true that Christ was “delivered for our offenses” it is no less a fact that He was “raised” again for our justification (Rom. 4:25).

It is most important that we should be quite clear as to the *ground* of our justification, for Socinians present justification in the risen Christ in such a way as to repudiate the very foundation of our faith and hope. Denying as they do the imputation of Christ's perfect obedience to the account of all who believe in Him, they advance the conceit that it is the life of Christ *after* His resurrection and our participation of the same by the new birth which constitutes us righteous before God. It is true that it is in the risen Christ believers are justified, because they *are* in Him and He *is* risen; but He is risen because “life” was what His righteousness, His perfect obedience to the Law entitled Him to, and believers are justified solely on the ground of His righteousness being reckoned to their account. “For if by one man's offense death reigned by one, much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ” (Rom. 5:17): the “gift of righteousness” *entitled them* to “reign in life” for as the wages of sin is death, so the reward of righteousness is life.

It remains for us now to point out that the relation between Christ and His people is *more* than a *legal* one: it is one of vital union and communion of nature, too. “Verily, verily, I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead (in sins) shall hear the voice of the Son of God, and they that hear shall live. For as the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself” (John 5:25, 26). That is said of Christ not in connection with His original place in the Godhead, but of Him as Mediator and in relation to His people. It is in that relation only that the Father has “*given to the Son to have life in Himself.*” It was not life for Himself alone, but life to share with and give to His people, as He Himself affirmed: “as Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him” (John 17:2). It is similar to, in fact parallel with, that other word of the Saviour's, “the glory which Thou gavest Me I have given them” (John 17:22). Life communicated from Christ at the new birth, when they are vitally “joined” to Him and become “one spirit” (1 Cor. 6:17).

Regeneration is the spiritual resurrection of the Christian. The new birth is no mere development of a spiritual germ with which each one is born. It is a lie of evolutionists that man is born with a spark of Divine life which needs only to be educated and cultivated for its fanning into a flame. Refutation of such

an error is found in Christ's declaration, "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink His blood ye have no life in you" (John 6:53). Conversely, those who appropriate to themselves the sacrifice of Christ give evidence of spiritual life and that life is imparted to them at the new birth: "you hath He quickened who were dead in trespasses" (Eph. 2:1). This Divine quickening is spoken of as a passing "from death unto life" (John 5:24). It is a miracle: a miracle of Divine grace and power. Clearly so, for resurrection, be it spiritual or corporeal is outside of man's providence. No corpse can quicken itself, nor can all the doctors and scientists of the world re-animate one. Only the living God can speak the word which will call forth a Lazarus from the tomb and He alone can regenerate.

Now regeneration or spiritual resurrection is the consequence of Christ's death and resurrection and His peoples' interest therein. This is clear from John 3:3-16, though few perceive the coherence of the passage. The "Son of man *must* be lifted up" of verse 14 looks back to the, "Ye *must* be born again" of verse 7, the pressure of which made Nicodemus to say, "How can these things be?" Christ made him a twofold answer, consisting of recrimination (vv. 10-13) and explanation (vv. 14-17). That which Christ here pressed on Nicodemus was: No one could be born again or have eternal life but as the result of full satisfaction having been made to the claims of a holy and righteous God. The Holy Spirit could not regenerate except on the ground of Christ's atoning death. It is not sufficiently realized that the work of the Spirit *in* God's people is based directly upon the work of Christ *for* them. The Old Testament types make this plain: the "oil" (symbol of the Spirit's work) was always placed upon the blood (Lev. 14:14-17). The Spirit comes *to* us *from* Christ (Acts 2:33).

"According to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, which He shed on us abundantly *through* Jesus Christ our Saviour: that being justified by His grace we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life" (Titus 3:5-7)—our regeneration and being "made heirs" is founded upon our justification. Again—the Father "according to His abundant mercy, hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead" (1 Peter 1:3). The meaning of our being begotten "by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" is most explicitly brought out by Paul in his prayer that the saints may know "what is the exceeding greatness of His power to *usward* who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He *wrought in Christ* when He raised Him from the dead" (Eph. 1:19, 20). The words we have italicized are the key to the deeper meaning of this passage: that which was "wrought" by God to usward nearly two thousand years ago has been steadily *manifesting itself* ever since, and will continue to until the whole of the "*usward*" are "quickened" (2:1).

One other word on John 3:14-16. If these verses be interpreted in the light of their context and in harmony with other passages they cannot signify (as commonly supposed) that sinners are born again because they believe. Those dead in sin do not savingly believe in Christ crucified. In all things God must act on the sinner *before* the sinner will act toward God. To "believe on" Christ and to "come to" Him are essentially the same thing (John 6:35) and none can come to Him without the Father "drawing" (John 6:44), and that "drawing" is accomplished by regeneration. In John 3:14-16 our Lord was completing His answer to Nicodemus' "How?" by showing that the way in which God's regenerating power takes effect and acts upon and in the sinner is that of *faith*. Being "born of the Spirit" the sinner "believes on the Son"—the "believe" of John 1:12 is explained by the "which *were* born of God" in verse 13. So, too, the "believeth" in John 5:24 is accounted for by "is passed" (Greek "hath passed") from death unto life. Faith does not

procure life but *evidences* its presence—see further 1 John 5:1.

At his spiritual resurrection or regeneration the Christian is made partaker of the Divine nature (2 Peter 1:4) so that new desires and affections are awakened within him. Those spiritual longings were expressed by the Apostle when he said, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable to His death: if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” (Phil. 3:10, 11). It is strange that so many miss the meaning of verse 11: surely Paul was not referring to the resurrection of his *body*, for no “if” is attached to *that* nor is it in anywise a matter of “attainment.” The whole context shows it was a *present* experience and not something future on which his heart was here set—that he had no doubt about the future of his body is clear from 2 Corinthians 4:14, etc. Paul was already “risen with Christ” legally (Col. 3:1) and what he now yearned for was to experience more of the power of this in his soul and the transforming effects thereof in his daily walk.

The Greek of Philippians 3:11 is, “If by any means I might attain unto the out-resurrection from among the dead,” the dead here being the *unregenerate*. A similar allusion is made in Ephesians 5:14, “awake thou that sleepest and arise from the dead,” which is addressed be it noted to *believers*: bestir yourselves, put on the new man, make evident your spiritual life, distinguish yourselves from the unregenerate. Go back to verse 10: “that I may know Him,” more intimately, “and the power of His resurrection,” that His life may be communicated more freely to my soul. True, every increase of that life would bring him into sharper collision with the opposing powers of this world, yet so far from shrinking from that he desired further to know “the fellowship of His sufferings.” Though judicially “crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20) Paul longed to be still more “made conformable unto his death” and thereby “attain unto” the out-resurrection from among the dead, that is, he might stand forth in sharp contrast and manifest distinction from the surrounding mass of spiritual corruption and decay—a living man in the midst of spiritual corpses, a light in the midst of dense darkness.

The above interpretation of Philippians 3:11 is obviously borne out by the verses which immediately follow. “Not as though I had already attained (the goal of my spiritual aspiration) either were already perfect (in my experience of the power of Christ's resurrection), but I follow after (ever seeking a fuller manifestation), if I may apprehend (lay hold of ) that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (vv. 12-14). Paul was still conscious that in his flesh dwelt no good thing. He was still in weakness and nothingness, with the feeblest believer, struggling on in the strength of the Lord toward the prize which was not yet in his actual possession. But though not yet within his grasp, there was no uncertainty as to the issue, for he had been laid hold of by Jesus Christ for this very end and eventually He would change his vile body and make it “like unto His glorious body” (v. 21).

As in Adam the doom of sin is advancing by a slow but sure process unto the “second death” (Rev. 21:8), so in Christ the reward of righteousness is advancing surely to its consummation. Even now believers are the sons of God and if sons then heirs, but “it doth not yet appear what we shall be” (1 John 3:2). Christians have already received the “first fruits of the Spirit” the earnest and foretastes of what is coming, yet they are “waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body” (Rom. 8:23). The new

Life which they have received shall yet be clothed with a body suited to it and since Christ Himself is our Life (in every sense and application of that term), it must be a body fashioned like unto His glorious body, for “as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly” (1 Cor. 15:49). It is on the Resurrection morning that there will be “the (full) *manifestation* of the sons of God” and then shall appear their “glorious liberty” (Rom. 8:19, 21)—freed from every vestige of sin in spirit and soul and body!

We come now to the third resurrection of the Christian. This, too, he owes entirely to Christ: as his legal or representative resurrection was *in* Christ, as his spiritual or regenerative resurrection is *from* Christ, so his bodily resurrection is the *fruit* of His death and resurrection. “And *as* it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment, *so* Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:27, 28). Since Christ expiated those sins, the “many” no longer lie under the doom of death and judgment, and therefore verse 28 goes on to assure us, “and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time *without sin* unto salvation.” Thus, so far as the original appointment goes, believers stand on the other side of death and condemnation. Accordingly, the Apostle says, “Behold, I show you a mystery: we (Christians) shall not all sleep” (1 Cor. 15:51)—“sleep” being the Scriptural name (cf. 1 Thess. 4:14, etc.), for that in the case of believers, which in the case of unbelievers is termed “death.” In all outward appearance it is the same event to both, but in its doctrinal import it is *not* the *penal* result of sin to the saint.

The mortal body of a Christian with its defects, frailties and diseases, is unfit for the glorious destiny of the children of God: “flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, neither doth corruption inherit incorruption” (1 Cor. 15:50). The believer's body in this life is the same as is that of the unregenerate and runs its course exposed to the contingency of ordinary mortality. Should that course be run out before the coming of the Lord, this tabernacle will be dissolved, to await a blessed resurrection at His coming. But the original appointment of Hebrews 9:27 does not hold good against believers and so the Apostle declares, “we shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump” (1 Cor. 15:51-52). Thus what is fundamental and necessary here is not death or physical dissolution but change—the latter being incidental only to those whose earthly career is run before the coming of the Saviour to effect the change. In its general character that “change” is a transformation from “mortality to immortality.” More definitely it is a transformation and conformity of our present body to that of Christ's glorious one, for in this respect also we shall be “like Him” (1 John 3:2).

The transformation of this vile body into the likeness of Christ's glorious body is the fitting issue and completion of our regeneration, when our *souls* were made alive spiritually. The essential difference between the “old man” and the “new man” is brought out in the strongest possible manner in the language of inspiration. There is not only the marked difference of moral characteristics but an *essential difference*. Paul traces this to their respective origins: “the first man Adam was made a living *soul*, the last Adam was made a quickening *spirit*. The first man is of the earth, earthy, the second man is the Lord from Heaven” (1 Cor. 15:45, 47). Men in their natural descent from the first Adam share his nature or life; believers, in their preternatural union with the last Adam, share His nature or life. And it is to the words used to describe these two distinct natures that we direct attention, as showing that the difference is in *essence* as well as in character.

There is an expressiveness in the Greek which is difficult to transfer to the English: the first Adam was made “a living *soul*.” The Greek word is “*psuche*” and the word rendered “natural” in verse 44 is an adjective formed from *psuche*—*soulical*, if we may coin a term. The last Adam is “a quickening spirit” and therefore the life derived from Him is “spiritual.” The same two adjectives are found again in 1 Corinthians 2:14 which affirms that a man must be born again ere he can receive and know spiritual things. “There is a natural body and there is a spiritual body” (v. 44): in other words, there is a body suited to the nature or life which we inherit from Adam; and likewise a body suited to the nature or life derived from Christ. In order to perceive the force of this it is necessary to go back a step in the Apostle's exposition of the doctrine of bodily resurrection.

In reply to the cavil of an objector, “How are the dead raised up? with what body do they come?” (1 Cor. 15:35), Paul refers to the established order of nature in the reproduction and perpetuation of vegetable life. When a seed is deposited in the ground in order to the production of a plant, first of all the seed itself must be decomposed before the germ or vital element which it contains can be developed. The seed itself does not come forth—“that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain” (v. 37)—the vital principle which it contained being liberated by the decomposition of the seed, is developed in the new plant. The life contained in every kind of seed is developed in its own appropriate plant; wheat-life or nature, in the wheat plant; barley-life or nature, in the barley plant. “God giveth it a body as it hath pleased Him, and to every seed his own body” (v. 38). The same is true regarding the life or nature of animals: each by the wise appointment of the Creator becomes clothed with, or is developed in, its appropriate body. The *body is* in every case suited to the *nature*: “one flesh of man, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, another of birds” (v. 39).

According to this Divine law and order, the old Adam nature has its own proper body, and since he was made a living soul (*psuche*) the body is a natural (*psuchical*) one. But such a body is unsuited to the new nature derived from Him who is a quickening spirit, though this is not yet made manifest. To all appearances a child of God in this world is like any other man, because he has only the natural body. The new life which is “spirit” (John 3:6) is not only a stranger in a hostile world but is ill-accommodated by the body in which, for the present, it dwells. “We that are in this tabernacle do groan being burdened” (2 Cor. 5:4). We long to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven—a spiritual body adapted to the new life. At death, the natural body, so alien and unsuited to the new nature, is laid aside: at resurrection the new life is invested with a spiritual body, though it must be remembered that decay in the grave is not absolutely necessary to this transformation.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **NATIONAL OWNING OF GOD.**

“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deut. 32:3). Great indeed is the Lord, yea, “His greatness is unsearchable” (Psa. 145:3). Before Him “the nations are as a drop of a bucket and are counted as the small dust of the balance: behold, He taketh up the isles as a very little thing.” “All nations before Him are as nothing, and they are counted to Him less than nothing and vanity” (Isa. 40:15, 17). “The pillars of Heaven tremble and are astonished at His reproof. He divideth the sea with His power, and by His understanding He smiteth through the proud. Lo, these are parts of His ways: but how little a portion is heard of Him!” (Job 26:11, 12, 14).

Listen to His own challenge: “To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa. 40:25, 26). Hear again His own affirmation, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside Me: I girded thee, though thou hast not known Me” (Isa. 45:5). “He is wise in heart and mighty in strength: who hath hardened himself against Him and hath prospered? Which removeth the mountains, and they know not; which overturneth them in His anger . . . Which doeth great things past finding out; yea, and wonders without number” (Job 9:4, 5, 10).

“In His times He shall show who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath

seen nor can see; to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:15, 16). Because God is so excellent and exalted His requirement is “ascribe ye greatness unto” Him. He requires that His majesty be recognized, His authority owned, His wisdom sought, His glory be made our supreme aim and endeavour. Our homage, our allegiance, our submission are His due. His claims upon us are paramount. He made us and can destroy us. We are entirely at His disposal, to be dealt with as He pleases. And none can say to Him, Nay.

“Ascribe ye greatness unto our God.” He is the One who “doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth” (Dan. 4:35). He is the One by whom “kings reign and princes decree justice” (Prov. 8:15). He alone can do us good, supply our needs, preserve our lives. He is the One before whom all must yet appear and give account of their stewardship. “Ascribe ye greatness unto our God”: those words were addressed unto a nation: it is an exhortation which is not confined to the regenerate but applies to all men at large. Let us point out some of the principal ways by which a nation ascribes greatness unto God—not only in words, but in a practical manner.

*By owning His Word.* It is in the Holy Scriptures that the character of the Lord God is most fully revealed and wherein His perfections are set forth. All the wisdom, morality, righteousness and benevolence which are to be found among men have issued from that Sacred Fount. If greatness is to be ascribed unto God then His Holy Word must be given the first place in the counsels of government, in the home and in the schools. Our children must be made acquainted with His ineffable holiness, His mighty works, His acts of judgment upon sin, that they may be warned against offending Him. Those who honour His Word, He honours. When an African chief inquired of Queen Victoria the secret of Britain's greatness she pointed to the Bible lying on her table.

*By revering His Sabbath.* To ascribe greatness to our God is the first and chief design of this ordinance, for it is an acknowledgement of Him as the Maker of Heaven and earth. By keeping the Sabbath holy unto the Lord we own His proprietorship over our souls, our bodies and our time. Observe both the order and the reason in, “Ye shall keep My Sabbaths and reverence My sanctuary: I am the LORD” (Lev. 19:30)—those who desecrate the Sabbath only mock God when they pretend to worship Him. The Sabbath Day Psalm (92: see title) opens with, “It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord and to sing praise unto Thy name, O Most High.” They who keep the Sabbath “honour Him” (Isa. 58:13), knowing Him as “the LORD their God” (Ezek. 20:20).

*By owning His Holiness.* This is the principal jewel in the crown of His perfections. God is light, and in Him is no darkness at all. He is ineffably pure, without spot or blemish. His wisdom is a holy wisdom, His power is a holy power, His love is a holy love. He is “of purer eyes than to behold evil and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13). “The LORD is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works” (Psa. 145:17). Therefore is He “angry with the wicked every day” (Psa. 7:11), and therefore sin must be put away from us if we are to enjoy His blessing—“your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer. 5:25). If we as a nation would ascribe greatness unto our God we must humble ourselves before Him, confess our sins, and reform our ways.

*By acknowledging His judgments.* Because God is holy He refuses to wink at sin, yet because He is

merciful forgiveness is granted to those who repent and confess their sins. But where a people instead of forsaking their wickedness continue sinning with a high hand and brazen forehead, then the Lord pours out His indignation upon them. He will not be mocked with impunity but gives proof of His displeasure. Plagues are sent, peace is taken away, all the miseries of war are experienced. Nevertheless He will stay His hand if His rod is acknowledged. Even when Pharaoh said, “I have sinned against the LORD . . . entreat the LORD your God that He may take away from me this death” (Exo. 10:16, 17), the plague was stayed. If we would ascribe greatness unto our God we must acknowledge, “I know O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa. 119:75).

*By seeking His guidance.* The first recorded failure of Israel in the Wilderness was, “They made haste, they forgot His works, they waited not for His counsel” (Psa. 106:13). The finest equipped army, the ablest leadership, the most thoroughly prepared plan of campaign are not sufficient to ensure success. Unless wisdom be given from above all human schemes and efforts are likely to come to nothing. Joshua was imposed upon by the Gibeonites because he “asked not counsel at the mouth of the Lord” (9:14). Greatness is ascribed unto the Lord God when our leaders confess their insufficiency and seek help from Above. David was an experienced and successful warrior, but observe how again and again he “enquired of the Lord” (1 Sam. 23:2, 4; 30:8; 2 Sam. 2:1; 5:19, 23).

*By relying on His Power.* It is not sufficient to seek Divine guidance, there must also be dependence upon His power. “There is no king saved by the multitude of an host” (Psa. 33:16). “The horse is prepared against the day of battle: but victory is of the LORD” (Prov. 21:31). “Woe to them that go down to Egypt for help; and stay on horses, and trust in chariots, because they are many; and in horsemen, because they are very strong; but they look not unto the Holy One” (Isa. 31:1). In the heyday of success Napoleon said, “God is on the side of those with the biggest battalions,” but he learned otherwise before the end of his career. We ascribe greatness unto our God when we trust in the might which He supplies.

*By recognizing His Providences.* Events do not happen by chance: the history of a nation, like the life of an individual, is ordered by the Lord. He is the One who sets up and casts down, gives and withholds. The weather is regulated by Him, the crops are determined by His good pleasure. It is nothing but atheism or infidelity to deny God's oversight of all the affairs of earth. If, then, greatness is to be ascribed unto our God, recognition must be made of His good hand and thanksgiving returned for all His mercies. “*Thine, O LORD is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the Heaven and in the earth is Thine; Thine is the kingdom, O LORD, and Thou art exalted as Head above all*” (1 Chron. 29:11).

In proportion as these seven things *have* characterized the national life of Great Britain, of her Colonies, of the U.S.A.—has greatness been ascribed unto the Lord God, and to the same degree has He honoured those who honoured Him. Conversely it is equally true that the measure in which these seven things *have not* marked our national life—as material interests, the love of pleasure, a pagan mode of life, the setting up of idols have crowded out that which was due unto Him—instead of His smile we have experienced His frown.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1942

### **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.

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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 inerrent 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.

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January, 1943

### NEW YEAR'S COMFORT.

As we launch out into another year there is little visible prospect of a smooth and pleasant voyage. To the natural eye the clouds are dark and fierce storms seem imminent. The very uncertainty of what the morrow may bring forth fills many with uneasiness and trepidation. But how different should be the state of God's children: an all-sufficient Object is presented to the eyes of their faith from which unbelief derives no comfort. If the poor worldling is concerned with *what* lies before him, it is the blessed privilege of the believer to be occupied with *Who* goes before him—the One who is his Captain, his Guide, his Forerunner. “The Lord! HE it is that doth go before thee” (Deut. 31:8). What a difference that makes! O that writer and reader may be enabled to lay hold of this grand Truth as we enter another period of time and keep it steadily in mind throughout the coming days!

1. The Lord has gone before you in the grand decree of His *predestination*. Last year was one of suspense and sorrow, of trial and trouble and perhaps you tremble at what this one has in store. Well, here is solid comfort. Your future has all been marked out for you. You shall not tread a step which is not mapped on the grand chart of God's foreordination. All your circumstances have been Divinely ordered for you. Ah, Christian reader, what an immense difference this makes that you are not a child of chance, that your lot is not decided by the caprice of fickle fortune. Infinite wisdom and infinite love have arranged everything. You will go nowhere during 1943 but where God has decreed, His “goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2), planning your path, your life. A predestinating God has appointed “the bounds of your habitation” (Acts 17:26). You may be thrust into the furnace of affliction, yet you will not

be deserted. You may be brought low, yet it will be for your future blessing. You may be chastened, yet the rod is in the hand of your Father.

“Your times of trial and of grief,  
Your times of joy and sweet relief,  
All shall come and last and end  
As shall please your heavenly Friend.”

2. The Lord has gone before you in the preparations of His *Providence*. “My god shall supply all your need” (Phil. 4:19): full provision has *already* been made for it. Jehovah does not have to improvise. No unexpected emergency can overtake Him: “known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18). Therefore is it written, “And it shall come to pass that before they call I will answer” (Isa. 65:24). Before we reach a place, God has provided for us wherever the road leads, all has been made ready. “Who went in the way *before you*, to search you out a place to pitch your tents in” (Deut. 1:33); and He will not do less for His people today. Canaan was fully prepared for Israel long before they arrived there: “when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which *thou buildest not*, and houses full of good things which thou filledst not, and wells digged which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees which thou plantedst not” (Deut. 6:10, 11). Here is comfort for the preacher too: “The LORD, *He* it is that doth go before thee,” to prepare hearts for the message, for the reception of the Truth.

3. The Lord has gone before you *in Person*. The path which He calls you to tread has first been traversed by Himself. None other than the Lord of Glory became incarnate, entered this world of ours and tabernacled here for thirty-three years in the flesh, that He might be the Captain of our salvation (Heb. 2:10). “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth *before* them” (John 10:4). Are they required to tread the way of obedience? Well, their Shepherd has Himself preceded them therein. Are they required to deny themselves and take up their cross? Well, He Himself did nothing less. Are they called upon to be buffeted, not for their faults but when they do well, to be persecuted for righteousness' sake? Well, “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). What comfort is there here: that the trials we endure for the Truth's sake, that the unkind treatment we meet with from professing brethren because we dare not compromise are an essential part of the process of our being conformed to the image of God's Son! Shall we be called upon to pass through the valley of the shadow of death? Well, the Christian has nothing to fear, for Christ has gone before Him and extracted the sting of death.

4. The Lord has gone before you in the directions of His *Precepts*. “Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path” (Psa. 119:105), revealing the way of peace and blessing through this dark world. Especially is that true of its preceptive portions, for they make known the paths of righteousness which we are to tread. Ignorance of God's will concerning the way we should go is inexcusable, for He has already clearly and definitely made known His will. The highway of holiness does not have to be made by us: it is there plainly enough before us in the Word and it is ours to walk in it. “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel and afterward receive me to glory” (Psa. 73:24). A “guide” is one who goes before us, directing our course and the “counsel” of our Divine Guide is contained in His prohibitions and commandments and

according as we heed them shall we escape the dangers around us and be kept in the narrow way which leadeth unto Life.

5. The Lord has gone before you in the provisions of His *promises*. What are the Divine promises but so many anticipations of our varied needs and guarantees that God stands pledged to supply them? They are so many proofs of His omniscience which foresaw what would meet our requirements. They are so many tokens of His lovingkindness to manifest His tender concerns for us long before we had any historical existence. They are so many evidences of His faithfulness that He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly. Whatever tomorrow may hold, the Divine promises assure the Christian that the Lord has gone before and made every provision for him. No dire situation, no pressing emergency, no desperate peril can possibly arise but what there is one of the “exceeding great and precious promises” (2 Peter 1:4) exactly suited to our case. Their value lies in the fact that they are the word of His who cannot lie and “this God is our God forever and ever: He will be our Guide even unto death” (Psa. 48:14).

6. The Lord has gone before you into *Paradise*. Did He not expressly announce ere He left this scene, “In My Father's House are many mansions: if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place for you” (John 14:2)? Not for Himself but for His redeemed: nor would He entrust this task unto the angels. How it tells of the love of the Bridegroom for His Bride! Christ has entered Heaven on our behalf, taking possession thereof in our name: “whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus” (Heb. 6:20). His entry ensures ours. “Father,” He says, “I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me” (John 17:24).

“He and I in one bright glory  
Endless bliss shall share:  
Mine, to be forever with Him,  
His, that I am there.”

Here, then, is real substantial comfort, and what shall be my response thereto? “The LORD, He it is that doth go before thee” (Deut. 31:8). Then, first, my eye should be constantly fixed upon Him: “*looking unto* Jesus” (Heb. 12:2)—looking away from all else, trusting none other. Second, then it is my business to follow Him—for what other purpose is a Guide?—“When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him” (John 10:4). And as they do, so they find that He makes them to lie down in green pastures, that He leads them beside the still waters. Ah, who would not follow such a Shepherd! O that the Lord may say of us as He did of Caleb, “he hath followed Me fully” (Num. 14:24).

Third, then *fear* should be entirely *banished* from my heart. And will it not be so if faith really lays hold of this: “The LORD, HE it is that doth go before thee, He will be with thee, He will not fail thee, neither forsake thee; fear not, neither be dismayed” (Deut. 31:8).

7. The Lord has gone before *the preacher*. This little message would hardly be complete if we failed to include a special word for the minister of the Gospel. Nor has God overlooked him at this very point. “Behold HE goeth before *you*” (Matt. 28:7), is addressed immediately unto the servants of Christ and it is for their faith to appropriate the same. According as they do so will their hearts and hands be strengthened.

If you are really the servant of Christ, your Master has not called you to draw a bow at a venture but has appointed your specific place in His vineyard and has ordered everything in connection therewith. That does not mean all will be smooth sailing. It did not mean that for the Apostles, as the book of Acts shows. But it *did* mean that they were not left without a Pilot. HE not only went before them but gave assurance, “Lo, I am *with you*, alway, even unto the end of the world” (Matt. 28:20). That is the grand consolation of this writer. May it be yours, too.—A.W.P.

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February, 1943

### A SEARCHING QUESTION.

*“For what dost thou make request”* Nehemiah 2:4.

Nehemiah was a man whom many would envy. His environment was attractive and he occupied a position of prominence and honour. He dwelt “in the palace” (1:1) and was “the king's cupbearer” (1:11). Nevertheless he was far from being happy. Ah, my reader, material things cannot satisfy—neither wealth nor dignities supply contentment to their possessors. But Nehemiah was stricken with something more than natural discontent: his spirit was grieved because of the dishonour which had been done the Lord, because of the reproach which lay upon His cause, because of the woeful condition of His people. Jerusalem was in ruins: the temple was desolate. Israel were captives in a strange land, suffering because of the sins of their fathers. Nehemiah was deeply exercised, so that he “sat down and wept and mourned certain days and fasted” (1:4). Then he poured out his heart in contrite prayer and earnest supplication (1:5-11). Having prevailed with God, chapter 2 shows us how he prevailed with the king of Persia.

When Nehemiah appeared again before the king to serve him with wine, his countenance reflected the anguish of his soul. Whereupon his royal master inquired as to the cause of his sadness. For a moment Nehemiah was affrighted, sought the help of God, and then, like a man, told the king the cause of his grief. So far from being angry, the king asked, “For what dost thou make request?” The privilege of offering petition unto me is yours: what is it thou wouldest have me to do for thee? God touched the heart of this monarch showing that “the king's heart is in the hand of the LORD, as the rivers of water: He turneth it whithersoever He will” (Prov. 21:1). The Lord had given His servant favour in the eyes of this august

ruler. Beautiful is it to behold the sequel. Nehemiah refused to take personal advantage of such an opportunity and seek his own aggrandizement. Instead of asking for higher honours and emoluments for himself, he sought that which was for the glory of God and the good of His people.

“For what dost thou make request?” It is surely not a straining of this passage to apply it to the subject of prayer. Doing so, we may observe here, first, a call to *solemn consideration* when we are about to engage in this holy exercise. It is not an equal you are approaching, but the Majesty of Heaven. It is the Most High, the King of kings, the ineffably Holy One you are going to address. A realization of that fact should deeply impress the soul. Even though I am a real Christian, that gives me no license to rush into the Lord's presence with unbecoming familiarity and unholy irreverence. If Nehemiah was afraid in the presence of Artaxerxes, how much more cause have I to tremble before the Almighty: not with the trembling of servile dread but with the awe of His sovereignty, His infiniteness, His omniscience. Far be it from God's children to offer the “sacrifice of fools” unto Him before whom the very seraphim veil their faces. This searching question, then, bids us remove the shoes of carnality, approach with humility, and weigh beforehand the petitions we propose to present. Is my request suited to the character of Him whom I supplicate?

“For what dost thou make request?” Second, this is a call to *definiteness*. May we not legitimately take this as the King of Zion making similar inquiry of us? You seek unto His Throne of Grace: you desire an audience with His sacred Majesty—for what purpose? Why, to unburden your heart before Him, to obtain grace to help in time of need. But if you are not to insult Him and if your quest is not to be profitless, He requires definiteness. He stops you, as it were, on the threshold with this challenge: “for what dost thou make request?” Vague and undefined desires, indefinite and general petitions will get you nowhere. It is very necessary that we should put this question to ourselves ere we bow the knee before the Lord—exactly what is it I am going to ask for? Suppose that you were limited to a single request, for what would it be? If you might ask for one thing only, what would you select? Much of our praying fails because of *lack of* this definiteness. Can you remember the chief thing for which you supplicated even yesterday? If not, is there any wonder your praying accomplishes so little?

“For what dost thou make request?” Third, this is a test of *the state of our souls*. That for which we make request supplies an index to our inward condition, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” The natural man will ask for natural (material) things, the selfish for that which will minister to his own gratification—he asks amiss that he may “consume it upon his own lusts.” But the spiritual will ask for spiritual mercies that he may honour God and glorify Christ. He will ask for a heart that hates sin and loves holiness. He will ask for the subjugation of that which rises up in rebellion against the Lord. That He will “subdue his iniquities.” He will ask for God's love to be shed more abundantly in his heart and His Law to be written more deeply in his mind. He will ask for the strengthening of his graces: “quicken me according to Thy Word.” He will beg the Divine Husbandman to make him a more fruitful branch of the Vine.

“For what dost thou make request?” Fourth, this puts to the proof the *breadth of our affections*. The prayers of a genuine Christian are by no means restricted to the supply of his own personal need, but are concerned with those of his brothers and sisters in Christ. Thus our requests not only reveal the state of our hearts but the breadth of them. How we need to pray “Lord, enlarge my heart” (Psa. 119:32): deliver me

from a selfish and sectarian spirit. What a word is that: “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Eph. 6:18). “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (1 John 3:14), many of whom we have never seen in the flesh and are not even acquainted with their names! And how do we evidence our love for them? Because we find they are laid on our hearts: because we make their cause and welfare our own: because we daily make request for their blessing.

For what *ought* I to make request? What should be the chief burden of my petitions? Is not the reply furnished in the two prayers of the Lord Jesus: the one which He gave to His disciples (Matt. 6), and the other which He offered Himself (John 17)? A pondering of them in the light of our present inquiry reveals three things. First, that we should make the honour of God our chief concern, that His glory might be more and more manifested in us and by us and through us. That is where our Redeemer began: “When ye pray say, Our Father which art in Heaven, hallowed be Thy name” (Matt 6:9) and “Father the hour is come, glorify Thy Son that Thy Son also may glorify Thee” (John 17:1) This is what lay nearest His heart and should it not ours, too? Second, that we should supplicate for the whole Household of Faith. The prayer which He taught His disciples is the *Family Prayer*: all its pronouns are in the plural number. It is not “*my* Father” but “*our* Father.” It is not “give *me* and forgive *me*,” but “give *us* and forgive *us*.” Our hearts are to take in and go out to all our brothers and sisters. We behold the same thing in the petitions of our great High Priest: “I pray for *them*: I pray not for the world” (John 17:9). Six times over in that prayer we find Him making mention of the company “given to Him”: it was (and is) for the whole election of grace He intercedes. Third, that we should ask chiefly, though not solely, for spiritual blessings upon our fellow-saints. Only one of the petitions of Matthew 6 relates to the supply of temporal needs. In John 17 Christ prays for the preservation (v. 12), the joy (v. 13), the sanctification (v. 17), the unification, (v. 21), the perfecting (v. 23) and the glorification (v. 24) of the elect.—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

February, 1943

### **STRENGTH RENEWED.**

“They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength” (Isa. 41:31). What a blessed promise is this for those conscious of their feebleness! But it must be personally appropriated if we are to enjoy the good of it: faith must lay definite hold of the same and humbly but earnestly plead it before God. Nor should we regard it as restricted to the reviving of our *souls*: it includes also the re-energizing of our bodies, as not a few can testify. It is blessedly true that those who trustfully wait upon the Lord shall have their graces quickened, their spiritual strength renewed. But it is equally true that the greater includes the less and that if we confidently count upon His doing so, the Lord will renew our physical strength. “Through faith also Sarah herself received strength” (Heb. 11:11), and as the remainder of the verse shows, it was physical strength—but it was received “through faith”!

“The LORD shall renew their strength.” On many occasions has this writer—when preaching six times a week (rarely for less than an hour, usually seventy-five to ninety minutes) in the heat of Australia, journeying here and there to do so—returned home at 10 p.m. feeling worn and weary and pleading this promise expectantly and partaking of light refreshment, sat down for four hours' hard study and writing an article for this magazine. So also has his wife, born of parents who died before she was ten and herself of frail constitution, found this one of her chief stand-by's for many years past and proven for herself those words, “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb. 11:34). And why should not you also, Christian reader? Read carefully Isaiah 40:28-31 and turn it into believing prayer: but remember the strength must be used in the performance of duty and not frittered away! As prevention is better than cure, so is the renewing of our

vitality more desirable than “faith healing.”—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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March, 1943

### IN THE POTTER'S HOUSE.

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause thee to hear My words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it” (Jer. 18:1-4). This is a passage which has presented difficulty to not a few, or probably it would be more correct to say that (in most cases at least) it has been *made* to present difficulty. Enemies of the Truth have grievously “wrested” these verses and even the interpretations of its friends have not always succeeded in removing the mists which have beclouded the minds of those influenced by error. Because of this and also as we hope to write upon some later portions in this chapter, a comment or two on its opening verses may not prove unacceptable.

Arminians have appealed to this passage in support of their horrible and God-dishonouring tenet that the Creator may be thwarted by the creature, that puny man is able to bring to nought the designs of the Most High. If such a dreadful calamity were possible, then, to be consistent, they should carry such a premise to its logical conclusion, and avow

“The universe He fain would save,  
But longs for what He cannot have!  
We therefore worship, praise and laud,  
A disappointed, helpless God!”

Such a blasphemous caricature of Deity is repugnant and repellent to the last degree unto every renewed heart, yet is it one which finds more or less acceptance today in professedly “Christian” quarters. The natives of dark Africa manufacture idols with their hands but the heathen in Christendom fashion a “God” out of their Satan-blinded minds.

A disappointed and defeated God! What a concept! What a contradiction in terms! How can He be the great Supreme if man is capable of check-mating Him? How can He be the Almighty if lacking in ability to carry out His will? Who would render homage unto One who is thwarted by His creatures? How vastly different is the God of Holy Writ, who has but to speak and it is done—who commands and it stands fast (Psa. 33:9)!

Jehovah is no pasteboard Monarch. No, “our God is in the heavens: He hath done *whatsoever* He hath pleased” (Psa. 115:3). “Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did He in Heaven and in the earth, in the seas and all deep places” (Psa 135:6). “This is the purpose that is purposed upon the whole earth, and this is the hand that is stretched out upon all the nations. For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul? and His hand is stretched out, and who shall turn it back?” (Isa. 14:26, 27). “I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel *shall* stand and I will do *all* My pleasure” (Isa. 46:9, 10).

But are there not other passages which speak of God in quite another strain? Suppose such be the case, then what? Why, would these not oblige us to modify our conception of the absoluteness of God's supremacy as predicated in the verses cited above? Certainly not. The Holy Scriptures are not a “nose of wax” (as Papists have wickedly affirmed) which man may twist as he pleases. They are the inspired Word of God, without flaw or contradiction; yet we need wisdom from the Holy Spirit if we are to *interpret* them aright. “God is Spirit” (John 4:24), incorporeal, and therefore “invisible” (Col. 1:15), “whom no man hath seen nor can see” (1 Tim. 6:16). Must we, forsooth, modify this representation of His ineffable Being because we read of His “eyes” (2 Chron. 16:9), His “hands” (Psa. 95:5) and “feet” (Exo. 24:10)? “He that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep” (Psa. 121:4): is that negated by the statement, “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep” (Psa. 78:65), or because He represents Himself as “rising up early” (Jer. 7:13)?

When Scripture affirms that God's “dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and He doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and *none* can stay His hand” (Dan. 4:34,35), are we obliged to place limitations upon such supremacy when we hear Him saying elsewhere, “I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My counsel, and would none of My reproof” (Prov. 1:24, 25)? Of course not.

Then how are we to avoid such an expediency? By distinguishing between things that differ: by discriminating between God's secret will and His revealed will, between His eternal decree and the rule which He has given us to walk by. The latter passage speaks of men scorning the Word of God, which it is their responsibility to obey. The former passage affirms the sovereign supremacy of God over all, whose

eternal purpose is accomplished in and by men, not because of their willing compliance but in spite of their enmity and rebellion—as was the case with Pharaoh.

Settle it in your mind once and for all, my reader, that the true and living God is King of kings and Lord of lords, the Almighty, whom neither man nor devil can defeat or successfully resist—for such is the plain and positive teaching of His word. The churches may no longer proclaim such a God. The vast majority of those who still pose as His people may no longer believe in such an One, but that alters not the fact that He *is so*: “Let God be true and every man a liar” (Rom. 3:4). Settle it in your mind likewise that Holy Writ cannot contradict itself, and therefore if the meaning of some passages are not clear to you, humbly look to their Author to enlighten you—for the obscurity is in your mind and not in His Word.

When Christ affirmed, “I and My Father are one” (John 10:30), He spake according to His absolute Deity. But when He declared, “My Father is greater than I” (John 14:28), He spake as the God-man Mediator. The perfect accord of the two passages is evident when we perceive the dual relationship of Christ to the Father: as the Son and as God-man. In like manner we must learn to distinguish between God speaking as absolute sovereign and as the Enforcer of human responsibility—as the One who deals with men according to their condition.

Now in the verses at the beginning of this article there is not even an apparent difficulty: men must read into it what is not there before they encounter a stumbling stone. The Lord does *not* affirm therein that He is represented by “the potter” (vv. 5-10 are considered in our next), and if we suppose He *is*, then we shall be rightly confounded. Jeremiah was sent to a “potter's house” that he might receive instruction from what he saw. While there he witnessed a vessel of clay “marred” in the hand of the potter. Most assuredly that cannot picture man's fall, for his Creator pronounced him “very good” when he left His hands. Nor can it picture the experience of any since the Fall, for the hand of God is the place of safety and not of injury. Further, we are told this potter “made it (the marred vessel) again another vessel.” But God never mends what man has marred, but displaces with something altogether *new*: the old covenant was set aside for the New (Heb. 8:8), the old creation for a New (2 Cor. 5:17), the present Heaven and earth by a New (Isa. 65:17). Rather is the “as seemed good to the potter to make it” the particular similitude fastened upon (v. 6).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1943

### AN HONEST HEART.

If there is one thing more than another which we seek to keep in mind while preparing articles for these pages it is the need for and importance of preserving the *balance* of Truth, for we have long been convinced that untold harm has been done to souls through failure at this point. If the preacher gives a disproportionate place in his ministry to the Divine Law, relegating the Gospel to the background, not only are his hearers in danger of forming a one-sided concept of the Divine character but the Christian is deprived of that which is most needed for the establishing and growth of his faith in Christ. On the other hand if the Divine Law be virtually shelved so that its strictness, its breadth and its spirituality are not made known, light thoughts upon sin and superficial views of the holiness of God will be the inevitable result. Both the Law and the Gospel must be expounded and enforced if souls are to be acquainted with God as “light” (1 John 1:5) and as “love,” and if they are to render unto Him that which is His due.

In like manner there needs to be proportionate attention paid to both doctrinal and practical teaching, the one relating to instruction and the other concerning deportment. It is an essential part of the pulpit's office to open up the foundational truths of the Christian Faith, for only thus will souls be fortified against error. It is ignorance of the Truth which causes so many to fall easy victims to Satan's lies. Such doctrines as the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Holy Trinity, the Sovereignty of God, the Fall of man, the Everlasting Covenant, the Person and Office of the Mediator, the design and nature of the Atonement, the Person and Work of the Holy Spirit, the Justification and Sanctification of the believer must be systematically taught if the minister would discharge his duty. Yet he must not confine himself to doctrine:

they who feed on rich food and then take little or no exercise become sickly and useless—true alike naturally and spiritually. Faith must produce works if it be worth anything. Well-nurtured branches of the vine are for fruitfulness and not ornamentation. Christians are to “adorn the doctrine of God” (Titus 2:10) by a daily walk which glorifies Him and is a blessing to their fellows.

Once more—if the balance is to be preserved the preacher must see to it that he is careful to maintain a due proportion between the objective and subjective sides of the Truth. He fails miserably in the discharge of his duty if he neglects to probe the professor and search the conscience of his hearers. He needs to remind them frequently that God requires Truth “in the *inward* parts” (Psa. 51:6), that His Law must be written “upon the heart” (Heb. 8:10) if it is to exert any effectual power in the life. He is required to call his hearers to “examine yourselves whether ye be in the faith” (2 Cor. 13:5)—yea urge them to pray with David, “Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my ways” (Psa. 139:23). Multitudes of professing Christians mistake an intellectual assent to the letter of Scripture for a saving faith, and most of what they hear in so-called evangelical circles is only calculated to bolster them up in a false hope. He who is faithful in dealing with souls will frequently remind his hearers of Christ's statement, “Not everyone that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of Heaven: but he that *doeth* the will of My Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 7:21).

But the preacher needs to be much on his guard lest he overdoes what is termed “experimental preaching.” If he virtually confines himself to the lines specified in the preceding paragraph his hearers will become too introspective, too busily engaged in looking within, and instead of their assurance being strengthened, genuine Christians will be filled with doubts and questions about their state. To counteract that tendency the objective side of the Truth must also be emphasized. Christ in all the wonders and glories of His peerless Person, in the perfections of His mediatorial office, in the sufficiency of His atoning work, must be held up to view, so that the hearts of His redeemed may be drawn out to Him in faith, in love, in worship. They must be encouraged to “look unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2) and “consider the Apostle and High Priest of their profession” (Heb. 3:1), for only thus will they be furnished with both incentives and strength to run the race that is set before them.

What has been pointed out above applies as much to the editor of a magazine as to the occupant of the pulpit. He must beware of being a “hobbyist”—always harping upon a favourite theme. Side by side with pressing the precepts of Scripture he must dwell upon the exceeding great and precious promises of God. Messages of exhortation must be balanced by messages of consolation. Articles which rebuke and lay low need to be followed by subjects which comfort the mourner and lift up the soul in praise to God. If on the one hand we read that the Lamb is to be eaten with “bitter herbs” (Exo. 12:8), right after we are told of the “tree” being cast into the bitter waters of Marah so that they were made sweet (Exo. 15:25). If the Word of God be likened to a “hammer” which breaks in pieces the hard heart (Jer. 23:29) and a sword to pierce even to “the dividing asunder of soul and spirit” (Heb. 4:12)—we also find it being compared with “honey and the honeycomb” (Psa. 19:10). He who is wise will observe these things and seek grace to be regulated accordingly.

At present we are engaged with a particularly searching portion of the Sermon on the Mount, and one design we have in dwelling upon it in such detail is the testing and exposing of formal professors. It is

therefore expedient that we should accompany these articles with a message that is intended to help (under God's blessing) those of the unestablished saints who are liable to draw a false conclusion therefrom. If empty professors are ready to greedily devour that Bread which is the peculiar portion of God's little ones, it is also true that not a few regenerate souls are prone to appropriate unto themselves that which applies only to hypocrites. If on the one side there are unregenerate people who firmly believe themselves to be real Christians, on the other side there are genuinely renewed souls who greatly fear they are not Christians at all—they who now conclude the profession of faith made by them, sincerely, in the past, was based on a delusion, and that after all they have been deceiving themselves and others—that they are hypocrites.

It is indeed a fearful thing for a soul to be living in “a fool's paradise,” persuading one's self all is well while in reality the wrath of God abides on him. But is it anything less tragic (even though less dangerous) for a child of God to live in “the slough of despond,” passing sentence of Divine condemnation upon himself when in fact God has blotted out his transgressions? Why allow Satan to rob me of all rest of soul when peace and joy are my birthright and legitimate portion? Perhaps, the reader replies, because I cannot help myself, the Enemy is too powerful for me. But my friend, Satan obtains his hold *by lies*, and his hold is broken as soon as we meet him with the Truth. He succeeds in seducing men into sinful acts by promising them pleasure and profit therefrom; but the child of God meets his evil suggestions by reminding himself that if he sows to the flesh he must of the flesh reap corruption. In the light of what God says are the fearful and certain consequences of sin, the lie of Satan is exposed and rendered powerless. Once you have good and solid reason to believe a work of grace has been wrought within you, pay no attention to the doubts which Satan seeks to cast thereon.

But something much graver and more grievous is involved than an act of folly when a child of God accredits Satan's lie that he is but a deceived soul and hypocrite: he dishonours and insults *the Holy Spirit!* A genuine Christian would be horrified at giving place to the delusion that the redemption of Christ is imperfect and inadequate, that His atoning blood is not sufficient to cleanse from sin, that it must be plussed with something from the creature. And ought he not to be equally horrified at calling into question the reality and efficacy of the Spirit's work in regeneration, supposing it is not to be credited unless it is regularly confirmed by certain feelings of which we are the subjects? Is it any less a sin to deny or even doubt the work of the Holy Spirit than it is to deny or doubt the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ? Are we as diligent in seeking to guard against the one as much as the other? It is much to be feared that few even among the saints regard these sins as being equally grave. Ah, my reader, it is a vile thing for me to affirm that I am unregenerate if there is clear proof—obtainable by comparing myself with God's unerring Word—that the blessed Spirit of God has quickened me into newness of life. Plain warning against this enormity has not been sufficiently given by the pulpit.

What is meant, it may be asked, by the “clear proof” which God's Word presents to the renewed of their regeneration? That is a most important question, for ignorance thereon or a mistaken conception of the nature of that proof has kept many a quickened soul from enjoying that spiritual peace and assurance to which he was justly entitled. Unless I know what are the principal features of a born-again soul, how can I compare or contrast myself with them? If I form my own idea of what it is which fundamentally and experimentally distinguishes a Christian from a non-Christian, or if I derive my concept from the ideas and

confessions of fellow mortals instead of allowing it to be molded by the teaching of Holy Writ, then I am certain to err. How many, for example, suppose that regeneration consists of a radical change of the old nature, a transforming of the flesh into the beauty of holiness—and then because they discover there is still a sink of iniquity within and sin now rages even more fiercely than it did formerly, draw the conclusion that most certainly no miracle of grace has been wrought within them?

Now in the parable of the Sower, the first recorded one of Christ's, we find what should be of great comfort to the fearing and trembling ones of the flock, for if they will carefully compare themselves with the different characters which are depicted in that parable, they ought to be able to perceive *which of them* portrays their *own* case and describes their own condition, and thus ascertaining which company they really belong. But in order to this there must be a genuine and frank looking of facts in the face. On the one hand, there must be no undue eagerness to believe the best of themselves, refusing to recognize their own features if the mirror of the Word reflects them as ugly ones. And on the other hand there must be no stubborn determination to go on believing the worst of themselves, declining to identify their picture even when it is drawn by the heavenly Artist, simply because it depicts their countenance as made comely by the operations of Divine grace. Mock humility and feigned modesty are as much a sin as pride and presumption. David was not boasting when he said, “How love I Thy Law,” nor was Paul when he said, “I have fought a good fight.” Each spoke the truth, but gave God the glory for his experience.

In the parable of the Sower our Lord sets before us the reception which the preaching of God's Word meets with. He likens the world to a field, which He divides into four parts according to the different kinds of its ground or soil. In His interpretation of the parable Christ explained those different soils as representing various classes of those who hear the Word. They may be termed the hard-hearted, the hollow-hearted, the half-hearted, and the honest-hearted. The importance of this particular parable appears in the fact that it is recorded by Matthew, Mark and Luke, and all three narratives should be carefully compared in order to obtain the complete pictures set forth. In this parable Christ is speaking not from the standpoint of the Divine counsels, for there can be no failure there—but from that of human accountability. What we have here is the Word of the Kingdom addressed to man's responsibility, the effect it has on him, his response thereto, and the reasons why the outcome is unfruitfulness or fruitfulness.

The first class are the wayside hearers. In eastern countries the public highway often runs right through the centre of a field, and because of the traffic constantly passing over it is beaten down, packed, and becomes hard and unyielding. Such is the heart of all those who are given up to the commerce, the pleasures and fashions of this world. They may from various motives attend the house of prayer, but the preaching of the Word has no effect upon them: they are unresponsive thereto. They do not go there seeking a blessing and their souls are unaffected by what they hear. They do not cry unto God, “that which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32), for they are not concerned for His glory or their own eternal welfare. They have no real personal interest in spiritual things and are quite unimpressed by the most solemn representations and unmoved by the most winsome appeals. Their bodies are in the pews but their minds are elsewhere, their thoughts are upon the things that perish, their affections set on things below. They are not there to worship God and are glad when the service is over.

Now let us notice the two things which are said of this class. First, “when anyone heareth the Word of the

kingdom, and understandeth it not” (Matt. 13:19). How could the message have any effect upon him when he failed to grasp its purport? And how could he expect to enter into its meaning when his attention was not concentrated thereon, when his interest was elsewhere? He has none but himself to blame. If he prays not for light, whose fault is it that he remains in darkness! Second, “then cometh the Wicked One and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart.” Where there has been no meditation upon the Word heard or read, no understanding thereof, and so, no impression made upon the heart, it is an easy matter for the great Enemy of God and man to catch away the good Seed or crowd out of the mind that which obtained a superficial entrance, so that there will not even be serious reflection thereon. Now my reader, are you prepared to solemnly and definitely affirm that you have no understanding of the Word of God, that it is entirely to you as if written in an unknown tongue, that Satan has so caught it away it has no place in your thoughts?

The second-class are the stony-ground hearers. The type of ground referred to here is that where the bed or base is of rock yet with a thin layer of earth over it. Into this shallow soil the seed is received but the result is most superficial and evanescent. It cannot be otherwise, for as our Lord points out, “they had no deepness of earth, and when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away.” Those who belong to this class are what may be termed the emotional type. They are very impressionable, easily moved, quickly stirred. Yet it is all on the surface. They make good resolutions and quickly break them. They hear the Gospel and are carried away by the eloquence of the preacher and leap into Christ as it were in a moment, and profess an instantaneous faith in Him. Their faces are radiant and their joy is exuberant. They are the ones who come “forward” at Revival meetings and rush into church membership, but their future history is most disappointing.

Let us take note of the three things said of this class. First, “the same is he which heareth the Word and anon (instantly) with joy receiveth it.” The emotions have been stirred, but the conscience has not been searched. There was no awe of soul in realizing Who it is with whom we have to do, no heart-rending horrors of the sinfulness of sin, no alarm at the wrath to come—nothing but a sudden, yet transient, joy. Second, “yet hath he no root in himself.” It was only a surface effect, a mere passing sentiment. There has been no plowing up of the soul, no Law-work producing deep and lasting convictions. Third, “but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the Word, by and by he is offended” (Matt. 13:20, 21). Their “goodness is as a morning cloud and as the early dew that goeth away” (Hosea 6:4) The scoffs of the ungodly, the cold shoulder from old friends prove too much for them, and the churches know them no more. Now my reader, test yourself at this point: has your experience stood the test of time or have you abandoned your profession and returned to your wallowing in the mire?

The third class are the thorny-ground hearers. The type of ground here referred to is where the soil seems to be more fertile and favourable, for it is neither so beaten down as to have an impenetrable surface nor so shallow that there is no room for root. But it is inimical to a desirable crop, for weeds and thistles, thorns and briars choke and crowd out the good seed so that an harvest is prevented. This is admittedly the most difficult class to diagnose. The seed has taken root and a shoot springs up and promises well, but it is surrounded by hostile weeds. However, it survives and puts forth an ear, but it is so festooned with briars that the sunshine cannot reach it—its life is choked, and it comes to nothing. They who belong to this class attempt to serve two masters. They are very pious on the Lord's Day, but thoroughly impious on the other

days. They sing the songs of Zion, are members of a church, but make no serious attempt to regulate their daily lives by the precepts of Holy Writ.

Let us take note of Christ's interpretation of the thorns. In Matthew 13:22 they are defined as “the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches.” The one who has made a Christian profession is young. He has a growing family, his position in this world is not yet secured and therefore he cannot be expected to be out and out for the Lord. Once he “makes good in life” he will have more leisure for spiritual things and more to give to the cause of Christ. Meanwhile temporal anxieties weigh him down. Suppose he “makes good”—does the Lord *now* have the first place in his affections and thoughts? Far from it—riches are deceitful and cumber their possessor. He feels he must live in accord with his improved position, do more entertaining, send his children to college. Mark 4:19 adds “the lust of other things entering in”—perhaps he aspires to civic office or membership in Parliament, and how can he spirituality thrive in politics! Luke 8- 14 gives “the pleasures of this life.” These are the thorns which choke so many, and they “bring no fruit to perfection” or completion. Would you say, my readers, that the “thorns” have so choked the Word of God in you that you have brought no fruit to completion?

The fourth class are the good-ground hearers. This is soil which not only receives the seed and has depth to give it root, but where it springs up, bears fruit and actually brings forth a goodly yield, so that the husbandman is well-rewarded for his labours. Let us take careful note then of what is here predicated of the good-ground hearer. First, it is, “he that heareth the Word and *understandeth it.*” He has taken pains so to do. He has “searched the Scriptures daily” (Acts 17:11) to ascertain whether or not the things to which he has listened are really according to the Divine Oracles, for he feels there is far too much at stake to take any man's say-so for it. Mark 4:20 adds, “and *receive it.*” He has prayerfully pondered what he has heard and personally appropriates it as God's message to his own soul. However unpalatable to the flesh, however searching and humbling, he refuses it not. Luke 8:15 adds “and *keep it and bring forth fruit with patience.*” He holds fast the Word because it is treasured up in his heart as his most cherished possession, and though he is much discouraged by the slowness of his growth he perseveres in crying to God for the increase.

But there is one word said concerning this fourth class which we wish to particularly observe: they are the ones who receive the Word “In an *honest* and good heart.” This is the only time in the parable that our Lord defines the kind of heart which received the Word. It is here we have disclosed the decisive factor, that which fundamentally distinguishes those belonging to the fourth class from all the others. Thus it is of prime importance we should seek to ascertain exactly what is connoted by “an honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15), and diligently search ourselves whether or not we possess such. Clearly the terms used here by Christ are in designed contrast from Jeremiah 17:9—“the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked,” which describes that which every descendant of Adam is born with. “An honest and good heart” then is not the natural heart, but one which Divine grace has imparted.—A. W. P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### IN THE POTTER'S HOUSE.

“Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it; if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in My sight, that it obey not My voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them” (Jer. 18:5-10).

A superficial reading of those verses may suggest they contain that which supports the Arminian's conception of God, yet a more careful pondering should show there is nothing whatever in them which militates against the “immutability of His counsel” (Heb. 6:17). The Lord does not here say to Israel “ye have become marred in My hand”—ye have defeated My purpose concerning you,” nor does He declare, “I will repair and make another vessel of you”—revise My intention and try again. Rather does He affirm His sovereignty and supremacy over them: “as the clay is in the potter's hand so are ye in Mine hand.” Again, it is to be carefully noted that God is not here speaking of the spiritual and eternal destiny of individuals, but of the earthly and temporal fortunes and misfortunes of kingdoms (Jer. 18:7) In this passage the Most High is viewed as the Governor of the nations, as the Dispenser or Withholder of eternal blessings, and not as the Predestinator of His Church to everlasting glory. God deals with kingdoms on a very different footing from what He does His dear children, and unless that be clearly recognized we shall

be without the master-key which opens scores of passages

The favour which the Lord shows unto a nation is an altogether different thing from the love which He bears unto His elect, and he who is blind to such a distinction is utterly unqualified to expound Holy Writ. God's favour unto a nation is merely the outward dispensing of good things, which favour is forfeited when they turn their backs upon Him. But His love for the elect is an eternal and unchanging purpose of grace which effectually works in them, ceasing not to do them good and securing their everlasting felicity with regard to the former. He may pluck up and pull down what His providence has planted and set up, but to the elect, His assurance is, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it" (Phil. 1:6). From the former He may withdraw what He has bestowed, but to the latter, "the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). Nor do the variations of the Divine dispensations with a kingdom argue any fickleness in His character, rather do they demonstrate His stability—as long as a nation's ways please Him He gives proof of His approbation. When displeasing He evidences His disapprobation.

God may act in mercy with a nation today and in wrath tomorrow without the least "shadow of turning" or change of character, and so far from that being any alteration of His eternal decree it is through these multifarious dispensations it is accomplished, for He foreordained *all* that comes to pass. There is therefore no proportion whatever between the fluctuations of His temporal bestowments on a kingdom and the peculiar love and special grace of the Everlasting Covenant wherein God assures His saints of their eternal security on the ground of His immutability. The decrees of God, as to their execution are suspended on no condition in man. If they were, it would destroy alike His wisdom, independence and fidelity. On the other hand, when He declares, "them that honour Me, I will honour, and them that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed" (1 Sam. 2:30), God is enunciating a moral law according to which He governs the race. His decrees are His irresistible determinations. His laws reveal the duty of men and the issues thereof according to their response.

The Lord approves of obedience and righteousness wherever it is found and rewards the same with temporal blessings without the least saving grace. Conversely, He disapproves of sin and unrighteousness and sooner or later visits His anger upon them in this world. But even when the dark clouds of His judgments hang over a kingdom, calamity may be averted by national humiliation before God and reformation of conduct. But that no more implies fickleness in the Divine character that it denies His foreknowledge. The history of God's judgments on Egypt is a case in point: each time her monarch humbled himself in any measure, the Divine rod was lifted. Nevertheless, God had foreordained the destruction of Pharaoh and suited His dispensations in great variety and with many changes to bring it about. He plagued and freed him, freed and plagued him again, yet there was not the least alteration in God, all being so many effects of His power suited to the accomplishment of His unalterable purpose.

God's governmental dealings make more or less evident to men the proportion there is between their conduct and His attitude toward them—the correspondence is such as to convey impressions of His goodness, justice and mercy. The character of God's dominion is seen to be such that where righteousness and morality obtain He blesses "in basket and store," but where wickedness is obstinately indulged in it inevitably entails a doom of evil. Yet if sin is forsaken that doom is avoided and a heritage of prosperity is entered into. But such alterations as these in the Divine administration, so far from making God to be

capricious in His ways or unstable in the principles of His government, rather demonstrates that He is unalterably the same. It is because His procedure is marked by undeviating righteousness that He must change His dealings with men when their relation or attitude to Him involves a change. Consequently when God is said to “repent” it connotes no change in His purpose or mind, but only in the matter of His treating with men.

Jeremiah 18:7, 8 simply means that many of the judgments which God pronounces against kingdoms are not absolute declarations or infallible predictions of what is about to surely take place, but rather ethical intimations of His sore displeasure on account of sin and solemn threats of what must inevitably follow if there be no change for the better in those denounced. Whether or not the impending judgments become historical events is contingent upon their refusal to heed the warning. In like manner Jeremiah 18:9 has reference to no absolute promise of God: it is no unqualified declaration of what He would certainly do, but rather an intimation of His readiness to bless and prosper, accompanied by a warning that such blessing will be forfeited if obedience gives place to disobedience. God never signified in any promise of national blessing that the promise held good under *all* circumstances. See Deuteronomy 28:2 and 15! God ever presses upon men the fundamental distinction between sin and holiness. It was the fatal mistake of the nation of Israel to regard God's promises to them as absolute, supposing the fulfillment was certain regardless of their degeneracy.

We must, then, distinguish sharply between God's decrees and His denunciations, between His absolute purpose and His conditional promises, between His bestowment of spiritual gifts and temporal mercies, between the administration of the Covenant of Grace and the dispensations of His providence. We must distinguish between the ground on which Jehovah deals with His Church and with a nation, for the former is in Christ and the latter out of Christ. There was a radical and vital difference between Christ shedding tears over Jerusalem because the Jews stubbornly refused to enter into the benefits of a temporal covenant (Matt. 23:37) and His shedding His blood for His brethren that they might receive the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant (Heb. 13:20, 21). Changes in God's material favours unto a nation do not imply that the eternal purpose of spiritual grace is liable to alteration, any more than the removal of a local “candlestick” (Rev. 2:5) argues that He may take away His Spirit from any regenerate soul. The “wills” and “shalls” of Divine immutability and fidelity are never jeopardized by the “ifs” of human responsibility.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### AN HONEST HEART.

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience” (Luke 8:15). Let it be duly considered that as it is not the falling of the seed into the ground which makes it good, so it is not the Word of God which makes the heart honest. The soil itself must be rich or there will be no satisfactory crop, and the heart itself must first be honest if the Word is to be received and bear fruit. But such a heart no man has by nature—instead it is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. “By nature we are a lie and in our best estate vanity. The old nature is a lie, a mere falsity, something contrary to that nature God created. It was first introduced by a lie of the Devil (Gen. 3:5) and therefore a fancy that God had lied in His command. Therefore our old nature is no better than a lie, and we cannot serve God with it” (Stephen Charnock, the Puritan). The heart of fallen man is radically and essentially dishonest, feeding on lies, loving deceits, producing hypocrisies; and he can no more effect any alteration in it than the Ethiopian can change his skin. Nor does he even desire to do so—he is totally unconscious of its rottenness.

“The preparation (or disposings) of the heart in man....is from the LORD” (Prov. 16:1). It is by the regenerative operations of the Holy Spirit that the heart is made honest. Honesty of heart is the grand distinction between the genuine Christian and all other men. We do not regard it as a separate grace, like purity or humility, but rather is the regulator of all the graces: thus we read of “*unfeigned* faith” (2 Tim. 1:5) and “*unfeigned* love” (1 Peter 1:22). As holiness is the glory of all the Divine perfections, so honesty is what gives colour and beauty to all the Christian's graces. Holiness is the distinctive glory of the

Godhead: as Howe termed it, “an attribute of attributes, casting lustre upon the others.” “As God's power is the strength of His perfections, so His holiness is the beauty of them: as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them” (Charnock). This it is on a lower plane: without honesty to regulate them, the graces of the Christian would be worthless.

As honesty of heart is that which distinguishes the genuine Christian from all other men, so it is the grand feature which is common to all the children of God, none of them being without it. Different saints are eminent for various graces: Abraham for his faith, Moses for his meekness, Phineas for his zeal, Job for his patience or endurance. But honesty is that which characterizes and regulates all of them, so that to speak of a dishonest Christian is a contradiction in terms. An honest heart is an “upright” heart (Psa. 7:10): it is a “single” (Col. 3:22) or “undivided” one (Hosea 10:2). An honest heart is a “sound” one (Prov. 14:30), a “true” one (Heb. 10:22). The marks and fruits of an honest heart are candor, genuineness, truthfulness, integrity, righteousness, fidelity, sincerity—in contrast from dissimulation, guile, deceitfulness, pretense, treachery. An honest heart hates all shams. But passing from generalizations let us point out some of the more specific and fundamental workings and manifestations of an honest heart.

1. An honest heart *loves the Truth*, and none other does. “This is condemnation that light is come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19), and that is true—a description of all men the world over. What a fearful state to be in: not only in the dark, but loving the darkness. And why? Because it is congenial to their depraved hearts, it is their native element. Hence the passage goes on to say, “for everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to light, lest his deeds should be reproved” (v. 20). Many excuses are made why they turn away from plain and faithful preaching and why they do not read God's Word in private, but the real reason is because they hate the Light—exposure, even to themselves, is the very last thing of all they desire. In sharp contrast therefrom: “But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God” (v. 21). This is the man with an honest heart: so far from hating the Light, he welcomes it, wanting to be searched and discovered by it.

An honest heart is open to the Word, not merely to certain portions only, but to the Word as a whole. Such an one sincerely wants the Truth, the whole Truth and nothing but the Truth. He does not wish the preacher to please or flatter him, but to be frank and faithful. The language of the unregenerate is, “Speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10). They desire to hear of an easy and flesh-pleasing road to Heaven, one which does not demand the denying of self and forsaking the world. They want to be at ease in their sins and assured they are the children of God while free to serve the Devil. But it is the very opposite with one having an honest heart. He is fearful of being imposed upon, and thinking more highly of himself than he has a right to do. If he is deceived, he ardently longs to be undeceived; if he is building his house upon sand, he wants to know it. He is willing to be tested and searched, and therefore he “cometh to the Light”—does so repeatedly and continuously, as the tense of the verb denotes.

An honest heart, then, is a Truth-loving heart, one which genuinely desires to know the mind of God, one which is ready for his creed, his character and his conduct to be searched by the light of the Sanctuary. He wants to know the truth about *God*, the One with whom he has to do, the One before whom he must yet appear and render an account. He will not be put off with any superficial and sentimental representations

of the Divine Character, he determines at all costs to acquaint himself with God as He actually is. He wants to know the truth about *himself*, whether his soul be only slightly disposed or whether his case be so desperate as to be altogether beyond help. He is anxious to determine whether he has only a head or intellectual knowledge of things that matter most or whether he has been given a heart or spiritual knowledge of them. He wants to make certain of how he stands with regard to God and eternity, and he dare not take any man's opinion or say-so with regard thereto.

2. An honest heart *accepts the Divine diagnosis* of fallen man's condition and bows to the Divine verdict passed upon him. That diagnosis is that which is sinful, depraved, corrupt in every part of his being; that his understanding is darkened, his affections perverted, his will enslaved. The Divine Physician declares that, "from the sole of his foot even unto the head there is *no* soundness in him" (Isa. 1:6). It explains why this is so: because man, every man, is "shapen in iniquity" and "conceived in sin" (Psa. 51:5), and therefore "the wicked are estranged from the womb: they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies" (Psa. 58:3). So far from allowing that there is something spiritually good in every man, which only needs to be carefully cultivated in order to bring it to fruition, the Divine Physician declares, the "imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21), and in the flesh, "there dwelleth no good thing" (Rom. 7:18). And the honest heart quarrels not with that diagnosis, but receives it as true of himself.

Because fallen man is what he is he stands condemned before his Judge. The Divine Law pronounces him guilty. It declares that he is a rebel against God, that he has followed the desires of his own heart and disregarded the claims of his Maker. It declares that there is, "no fear of God" before his eyes (Rom. 3:18), that he has conducted himself as though there is no Day of reckoning to be faced. It declares that he has "set at nought all God's counsel and would none of His reproof" (Prov. 1:25). It declares that "the wrath of God abideth on him" (John 3:36). It declares that, in the searching light of the Divine holiness, his best performances, his religious actings, his very righteousnesses are as "filthy rags" (Isa. 64:6). Now because the *honest* heart welcomes the Light, because it sincerely desires to know the worst about himself, it bows to the Divine verdict and "sets to his seal that God is true" (John 3:33). An honest heart acknowledges, "I am vile" (Job 40:4), "without excuse" (Rom. 1:20), a Hell-deserving sinner; and none but an honest heart sincerely does so.

3. An honest heart causes its possessor to take his place *before God in the dust*. How can it be otherwise if he accepts the Divine diagnosis and condemnation of his condition? As the penitent thief on the Cross acknowledged, "we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds" (Luke 23:41), so the one who truly bows to God's verdict owns that the everlasting burnings are his legitimate due. Thus pride receives its death-wound, all pretensions to goodness are repudiated, and with the publican of old he smites upon his breast crying, "God be merciful to me a sinner." Instead of seeking to extenuate his transgressions, he wonders at God's longsufferance toward him. Instead of asking, What have I done to deserve eternal damnation? he marvels that he is not in Hell already. He perceives clearly that if such a wretch as himself is to receive salvation it must be by grace alone, and that God has the full right to withhold such grace if He so pleases.

4. An honest heart *ceases fighting against God*, which is only another way of saying that he repents of his evil past, for true repentance is a taking sides with God against myself. He who loves the Truth is

influenced and regulated by it; and therefore is he brought to renounce whatever is opposed to it. As light and darkness are opposites, so uprightness and crookedness, honesty and sin have nothing in common. Where there is an honest heart repentance and conversion necessarily follow. And repentance is not only a sorrowing for sin but also a turning away from it, the throwing down of the weapons of our warfare against God. To love the light is to love God, for He is light (1 John 1:5), and if we love God we shall forsake our sins, abandon our idols and mortify our lusts. An honest soul cannot do otherwise: anything short of that would be hypocrisy. “If we say that we have fellowship with Him and walk in darkness we lie and do not the Truth” (1 John 1:6). The upright man is the one who “feareth God and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8).

5. An honest heart *seeks to please God* in all things and offend Him in none. That is why this honesty is termed “simplicity (the single eye) and godly sincerity” (2 Cor. 1:12), for it desires and seeks the approbation of God above everything else. An honest heart refuses to accept the plaudits of men on anything for which conscience would condemn him. “God is a Spirit and they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). He cannot be imposed upon by pious words or a sanctimonious demeanor. He must be approached with “a true heart” (Heb. 10:22): all dissimulation and pretense has to be set aside in our dealings with Him who “trieth the heart and the reins” and whose eyes are “a flame of fire.” When the heart beats true toward God there is a deep desire to please Him, not in some things only, but in *all* things, so that without reserve it asks, “Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?” (Acts 9:6). True, that desire is not fully realized in this life, but the genuineness of it is evidenced when we can truly say, “I hate *every* false way” (Psa. 119:104).

6. An honest heart *feigns not wisdom*, but is very conscious of and frankly owns up to great ignorance. Even though he is well acquainted with the letter of Scripture and thoroughly familiar with all the external means of grace, that contents him not: there is a longing for a spiritual, an experimental, an efficacious knowledge of the Truth. Such an one feels himself to be the veriest babe in Divine things, which is indeed a healthy sign, for it is under such the mystery of godliness is revealed (Matt. 11:25). Such an one cries daily, “that which I see not teach Thou me” (Job 34:32), for he longs to know the way of the Lord more perfectly—not only in the letter but chiefly in the power thereof. So conscious is he of his ignorance that he prays with David, “make me to understand the way of Thy precepts” (Psa. 119:27)—how to walk in them, the way to keep them. And again, “Teach me Thy statutes”—observe well how this is repeated again and again (Psa. 119:12, 26, 64, 68, 124, 135), for it is in *this* the upright realize themselves to be more deficient.

7. An honest heart *makes conscience of sin*. Necessarily so if he sincerely desires to please God. Therefore he does not willfully and habitually ally himself in any known sin, against the light and stirrings of conscience, for “the highway of the upright is to depart from evil” (Prov. 16:17). As one of the lesser known Puritans said, “A righteous man hates all sins, even the ones he cannot conquer; and loves all the Truth, even that which he cannot understand” (Anthony Burgess). He makes conscience of what the world calls peccadilloes or trifling faults, praying, “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes that spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15), yea, “cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Psa. 19:12)—the sins of ignorance of which I am not conscious, but which defile before the thrice Holy One. Consequently, an honest heart makes it a point of confessing all known sins to God, even those of which his fellows know nothing. Sin is his heaviest

burden and greatest grief.

8. An honest heart *welcomes godly reproof*. “Grace will teach a Christian to take those potions which are wholesome, though they be not toothsome” (Geo. Swinnock, 1660). “Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8), but hypocrites will resent it and fools rage at thee. An honest heart prefers the bitters of gracious company to the dainties of the ungodly: he would rather be smitten by a saint than flattered by the unregenerate. He not only gives a permit to faithful admonition but, when in his right mind, invites to, “*Let the righteous smite me: it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head*” (Psa. 141:5). “As oil refreshes and perfumes, so does reproof, when fitly taken, sweetens and renews the heart. My friend must love me well if he tells me my faults: there is an unction about him if he points out my errors” (C. H. Spurgeon) and about me also if I heed him. “Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov. 27:6)—only the upright will subscribe to that.

9. An honest heart *is impartial*. “Now therefore are we all present before God, to hear *all things* that are commanded thee of God” (Acts 10:33). These words of Cornelius were the language of sincerity. How very rare is such a spirit. The average church-member wishes to hear only that which accord with “*our doctrines*” and when he reads the Bible it is through theologically-tinted glasses. Here is where so many preachers are handicapped: they are bound by a detailed creed and know that if they departed therefrom they would lose their position. Bias, prejudice, sectarian shibboleths quench the spirit of honesty. To desire the Truth for *Truth's* sake is rare indeed. But an honest heart is impartial, refusing to pick and choose and is not swayed by denominational prejudices. An honest heart values the Divine precepts equally with the promises, appropriates the admonitions and threats as well as the comforting portions of Scripture, acknowledges himself in the wrong and his opponent who has the Truth on his side to be right, and admires and owns the image of Christ when he sees it in one belonging to another company.

10. An honest heart is *chiefly concerned with the inner man*. In His solemn denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees Christ said, “Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess... Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matt. 23:25, 27-28). It is at this point especially that the genuine Christian is distinguished from the formal religionists. One with an honest heart makes conscience of wandering thoughts, evil imaginations the workings of unbelief, the risings of pride and rebellion against God. He seeks grace to mortify his lusts and prays to be cleansed from “secret faults.” He cries daily, “Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me” (Psa. 51:10); “Unite my heart to fear Thy name” (Psa. 86:11); “Incline my heart unto Thy testimonies and not to covetousness” (Psa. 119:36). He makes much of *heart work* and endeavours to keep it with all diligence (Prov. 4:23).

Probably most of our readers are ready to exclaim, Alas, this quite cuts me off: I freely admit that such honesty of heart as has been described ought to be found in me, but to my shame and sorrow I must confess that much to the contrary is still operative in my soul. But cannot you see that is the last thing you

world frankly own if you were dishonest?! The fact is that no soul is conscious of the workings of unbelief until God has *given* faith, is not troubled about the swellings of pride until humility is *bestowed*, mourns not over coldness until love is *communicated*, and is not exercised over deceitfulness before he is *made* sincere. We best learn to know things by their opposites. It would be a great mistake to insist that there is such a thing as perfect and unmixed honesty in this life, so that there is no guile or falsehood joined with it. We not only know in part, but our faith and love are weak and unstable, and honesty of heart has to contend with much that is opposed to it. If we can plead before God uprightness of intentions and if we grieve over all crookedness within us, that is sure proof we are no longer under the dominion of hypocrisy.

There are two distinct and mutually-hostile principles at work within the Christian, each bringing forth after its own kind, and it is by *what* each one brings forth that its presence may be ascertained. The “works of the flesh” are manifest (Gal. 5:19, etc.), but “the fruit of the Spirit” (v. 22, etc.) is equally identifiable. A detailed description of “the fruit of the Spirit” should not be understood to mean that “the flesh” has ceased to exist. And a portrayal of the workings of an honest heart must not be taken to signify that all which is contrary thereto has been expelled. David was an upright man, yet he found it needful to pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa. 119:29). The disciples of Christ had been given honest hearts, yet their Master deemed it requisite to bid them, “be not as the hypocrites” (Matt. 6:5). It is the regenerate who are exhorted, “wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile and all hypocrisies” (1 Peter 2:1), which would obviously be quite meaningless if those evils had been eradicated from their beings. “Who can understand his errors! Cleanse Thou me from secret faults” (Psa. 19:12). There is more deceit and self-ends operating in all of us than we perceive. If you prize an honest heart above a good name and value a clear conscience before God beyond a high reputation among men you are no hypocrite.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1943

### **GOD GOVERNING THE NATIONS.**

“If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them” (Jer. 18:8). Then is no “if” in connection with what God has foreordained, and the history of nations has been as truly and definitely predestinated as the destiny of each individual. “Known unto God are all His works from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18), and they are known to Him because they were decreed by Him. Now if God decreed an event He either foresaw what would be the issue of it or He did not. If He did not, where is His infinite wisdom and understanding? On the other hand, if He foresaw an event would not be, why did He purpose it should be? If God purposed a thing, then either He is able to bring it to pass by His wisdom and power, or He is not. If not, where is His omniscience and omnipotence? From the horns of that dilemma there is no escape. If God be *God* then there can be no failure with Him “The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations” (Psa. 33:11).

“If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto it.” There is always an “if” in connection with human responsibility, for man is as “unstable as water” being influenced by many things both from within and without; nevertheless he is held strictly accountable unto God. Nations, equally with Christians, are responsible: the Lord is their Maker, their Ruler, their God. His Moral Law is as binding upon kingdoms as it is upon the Church. *If* the rulers of the nations acknowledge God in the discharge of their office, if their laws be equitable and beneficent, maintaining a balance between justice and mercy, if the Sabbath be duly enforced, if the Lord be owned in

prosperity and sought unto in adversity, *then* the smile of Heaven will be upon that people. But if He be slighted and defied His frown will be experienced. As effects are dependent upon the operation of causes, and the character of the one determines the nature of the other, so a course of obedience is followed by very different consequence from one of disobedience, be it the case of a nation or individual.

“Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34) expresses a foundational principle and an unchanging fact. Right doing or walking according to the Divine Rule is the basic condition of national prosperity. A righteous administration of government and the public worship of God gives an ascendancy to a people over those where such things prevail not. Nothing so tends to uphold the throne, elevate the mind of the masses, promote industry, sobriety and equity between man and man, as does the genuine practice of piety, the preservation of the virtues and suppression of vice, as nothing more qualifies a nation for the favour of God. Righteousness is productive of health, of population, of peace and prosperity. But every kind of sin has the contrary tendency. “The prevalence of vice and impiety is a nation's reproach, conduces to disunion, weakness and disgrace, and exposes any people to the wrath and vengeance of God” (Thomas Scott). When sin has become a public “reproach” then ruin is imminent.

We repeat, then, that Jeremiah 18 portrays not Jehovah as the Determiner of eternal destiny but rather as the Dispenser of temporal benefits, not as decreeing the hereafter of individuals but as distributing the portions of the kingdoms. “Thou art the God, even Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth” (2 Kings 19:15), and as such He governs them on the basis of His moral Law and in accordance with the discharge of their responsibilities thereto. Jeremiah 18 reveals to us the fundamental principles which regulate the dealings of the Most High with the nations and the relations which He sustains to them. First, He is shown as an absolute Sovereign over Israel in particular and over all peoples in general: “as the clay is in the potter's hand, so are ye in Mine hand, O house of Israel” (v. 6). Jehovah has the most incontestable and immediate power over them. This shows the infinite ease with which He can deal with the most fractious. “He increaseth the nations and destroyeth them: He enlargeth the nations and straiteneth them” (Job 12:23).

Second, the Lord is here depicted as the righteous Governor of the nations, dealing with them according to their deserts. In the exercise of His high and unchallengeable authority the Most High is pleased to act according to the principles of goodness and equity. There is no arbitrary caprice in the infliction of punishment: “the curse causeless shall not come” (Prov. 26:2). The Lord “doth not afflict willingly (“from the heart,” margin) nor grieve the children of men” (Lam. 3:33), but only because they give Him occasion to and because the honour of His name requires it. “O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments, then had thy peace been as a river and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea” (Isa. 48:18) is His own avowal. Yea, had they respected His authority “I should soon have subdued their enemies and turned My hand against their adversaries” (Psa. 81:14) He declares. Let it be definitely recognized that God's dealings with the nation of Israel illustrate His administration of the nations today.

Third, the justice of God is tempered with mercy in His government of the nations. “The Lord is of great mercy” (Num. 14:18) and “plenteous in mercy” (Psa. 86:5), and therefore, “His tender mercies are over all His work” (Psa. 145:9). Consequently, when the dark clouds of Divine wrath gather over a kingdom, yea even when His thunderbolts have begun to be launched, genuine repentance will check the storm. When a

people humble themselves beneath God's almighty hand, evidencing the genuineness of their repentance by turning away from their wickedness and doing that which is pleasing in His sight, His judgments are turned away from them. “And the children of Israel (1) did evil in the sight of the LORD and forgot the LORD their God, and served Baalim and the groves. Therefore (2) the anger of the LORD was hot against Israel and He sold them into the hand of Chushanrishathaim and the children of Israel served Chushanrishathaim eight years. And (3) when the children cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer to the children of Israel, who delivered them” (Judges 3:7-9). The same order—sin, punishment, penitence and merciful deliverance—is repeated again and again in the book of Judges.

That these principles of the Divine administration apply to the Gentiles, equally with the Jews, is unmistakably clear from the case of Nineveh a heathen city, concerning which the Lord said “their wickedness is come up before Me” (Jonah 1:2). Unto the vast metropolis the Prophet was sent, crying, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4). But note well the sequel: “So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them... And he (the king) caused it to be proclaimed . . . Let neither man nor beast, herd or flock, taste anything: let them not feed nor drink water . . . let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not? And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them, and He did it not” (Jonah 3:5-10).—A.W.P.

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### **BEHOLDING THE CRUCIFIED CHRIST.**

“They crucified Him....and sitting down they watched Him there” (Matt. 27:35, 36). The reference is to the Roman soldiers, as is clear from John 19:23, confirmed by Matthew 27:54. They were the ones authorized to carry out the death sentence which had been passed by Pilate, and into their hands the governor had delivered the Saviour (Matt. 27:26, 27). With coarse scurrility they executed their task. Adding insult to injury they exposed the Lord Jesus unto the indignities of a mock coronation: robing Him in scarlet, crowning Him with thorns, hailing Him as King of the Jews. Giving full expression to their enmity they spat upon Him, smote Him with a reed, mocked Him. Restoring to Him His raiment, they conducted Him to Golgotha and affixed Him to the Cross. Having gambled for His garments, they sat down to watch Him—to frustrate any attempt at rescue which His friends might make, and to wait until life was extinct. By way of introduction let us briefly take note of three things.

First, *the circumstances*. The initiative had been taken by the religious leaders of Israel, for there “assembled together the chief priests and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, and consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety and kill Him” (Matt. 26:3, 4). How many of the foulest crimes which have blackened the pages of history were perpetrated by ecclesiastical dignitaries? Yet the common people were in full accord with their leaders, for “the multitude” (Mark 15:8) requested Pilate to adhere to his custom of releasing a prisoner unto them, and when he gave them the choice between Christ and Barabbas, they preferred the latter; and when the governor asked what was their pleasure concerning the former, they cried “Crucify Him” (Mark 15:13).

And it was to “content the people” Pilate released Barabbas (v. 15). When Pilate expostulated with them “all the people said, His blood be on us and on our children” (Matt. 27:25). And Pilate, the administrator of the Roman law, which boasted of justice, acceded to their unjust demands.

Second, *the scene*. This was the outskirts of Jerusalem, a city more memorable than either Rome, London or New York. This was the residence of David, the royal city, the seat of Israel's kings. It had witnessed the magnificence of Solomon's reign. It was here the temple stood. It was here the Lord Jesus had taught and wrought miracles, and into which He had ridden a few days earlier seated upon an ass, the multitudes crying, “Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest” (Matt. 21:9)—so fickle is human nature! Israel had rejected their King and therefore He was conducted beyond the bounds of the city, so that He “suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12). The actual place of the crucifixion was Golgotha which signified “the place of a skull.” Nature had anticipated the awful deed, the very contour of the ground resembling a death's head. Luke gives the Gentile name “Calvary” (23:33), for the guilt of that Death rested on both Jew and Gentile, as its saving efficacy was to be experienced by each.

Third, *the time*. This was as significant and suggestive as the historical and topographical associations of the place itself. Christ was crucified on the fourteenth of Nissan or about the beginning of April. It was the first of Israel's great national feasts, the most important season in the Jewish year. It was the Passover, when solemn celebration was made of that night when all the firstborn sons of the Hebrews were spared from the angel of death in the land of Egypt. At this season Jerusalem was thronged by immense multitudes, for it was one of the three annual occasions when every male Israelite was commanded to appear before Jehovah in the temple (Deut. 16:16). Thus, huge crowds had journeyed thither from all parts of the land. It was in no obscure corner nor in secret that the Great Sacrifice was offered up to God. And the fourteenth of Nissan was the day appointed for it, for the Lord Jesus was the antitypical Lamb—“Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). On no other day *could He* be slain: at an earlier date they “sought to take Him: but no man laid hands upon Him, because His hour was not yet come” (John 7:30).

“They crucified Him....and sitting down they watched Him there.” My divisions will be simple: what they saw; what I see; what do you see?

## I. What they saw.

1. They beheld *the most amazing event* of all history, the most awe-inspiring spectacle ever set before the eyes of men, the most tragic and yet the most glorious deed ever performed on this earth. They beheld God incarnate taken by wicked hands and slain, yet at the same time the Redeemer voluntarily laying down His life for those who have forfeited every claim upon Him. To those soldiers it was an ordinary event: the execution of a criminal. And thus it is with most of those who hear the Gospel: it falls upon their ears as a religious commonplace. To those Roman soldiers, at least for awhile, Christ appeared to them only as a dying Jew. Thus it is with the multitude today: to them the Lamb of God possesses neither form nor comeliness and when He is set before them in the mirror of the Word they see in Him no beauty that they should desire Him. His peerless Person attracts them not. His righteous claims are disregarded—His

sceptre is flouted—for His atoning blood they feel no need.

2. They beheld *the incomparable perfections of the crucified One*. How immeasurably different the mien of the suffering Saviour from what they had witnessed from others in similar circumstances! No cursing of His lot, no reviling of His enemies, no maledictions upon themselves. The very reverse—His lips are engaged in prayer! “Father,” He says, “forgive them, for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34). How amazed they must have been as they heard that Blessed One on the tree making “intercession for the transgressors” (Isa. 53:12). The two thieves who were crucified with Him mocked the Redeemer (Matt. 27:44), but at the eleventh hour one of them was “granted repentance unto life” (Acts 11:18) and turning to Jesus he said, “Lord, remember me when Thou comest into Thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). The Lord did not decline his appeal and say he had sinned beyond the reach of mercy but answered, “Verily, I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with Me in Paradise” (v. 43). Thus they witnessed an unparalleled display of sovereign grace unto one of the greatest of sinners.

3. They beheld *most mysterious phenomena*. They had sat down to “watch Him,” but after a while they were no longer able to do so. At midday it suddenly became as midnight: “from the sixth hour (after sunrise) there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour” (Matt. 27:45). It was as though the sun refused to shine on such a scene, as though nature itself was mourning over such a sight! During those three hours there took place a transaction between Christ and God which was infinitely too sacred for finite eyes to gaze upon—a mystery which no mortal mind can fully enter into. As soon as the Saviour committed His spirit into the hands of the Father, “Behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake and the rocks rent, and the graves were opened, and many bodies of the saints which slept arose” (Matt. 27:51, 52). No ordinary sufferer was this. It was the Creator of Heaven and earth, and Heaven and earth here expressed their sympathy.

4. They beheld and heard *that which was blessed to their conviction and conversion*. Pharaoh witnessed the most remarkable display of God's power in the plagues which He sent upon Egypt, but so far from inclining him to repentance he continued to harden his heart. Thus it ever is with the unregenerate while they are left to themselves: neither the most astonishing tokens of God's goodness nor the most awe-inspiring of His judgments melt or move them. But in the case before us God was pleased to soften the callous hearts of these Roman soldiers and illumine their heathen minds, for we are informed, “Now when the centurion and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earth quake and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, truly this was the Son of God” (Matt. 27:54). Personally we regard this as another of the miracles which took place at Calvary—a miracle of amazing grace, and it is our expectation to meet in Heaven the very man who hammered the nails into the Saviour's hands and feet and thrust the spear into His side: God's answer to Christ's prayer, “Father, forgive them.” Thus there is hope for the vilest sinner out of Hell if he will surrender to the Lordship of Christ and trust in His all-sufficient blood.

## II. What I see.

I perceive here *an unveiling of the character of man*. “Now all things that are discovered (margin) are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light” (Eph. 5:13). Now Christ is “the

true light” (John 1:9)—the essential, Divine, all-revealing light; consequently all men and all things stood exposed in His presence. The worst things predicated in Scripture of fallen human nature were verified and exemplified in the days of Christ. God says that the heart of man is “desperately wicked” (Jer. 17:9), and it was demonstrated to be such by the treatment meted out to His beloved Son. Scarcely was He born into this world than a determined effort was made to slay Him. Though He constantly went about doing good, relieving the distressed and ministering to both the souls and bodies of the needy, yet so little was He appreciated that He had to say, “The foxes have holes and the birds of the air nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head” (Matt. 8:20). On one occasion, “they besought Him that He would depart out of their coasts” (Matt. 8:34).

But not only was Christ unwelcome here, men *hated Him* and that “without a cause” (John 15:25). He gave them every reason to admire and adore Him, but they had an inveterate aversion for Him. The Word of Truth declares that “the carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). Men do not believe it, in fact most of them affect the very opposite; nevertheless, at Calvary they gave proof of it. Multitudes go through the form of paying homage to God, but it is a “god” of their own imagination. They hate the true and living God, and were it possible would rid the universe of His existence. This is clear from their treatment of Christ, for He was none other than “God manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16) and Him they hated and hounded to death, and nothing short of death by crucifixion would appease them. Here at Calvary the real character of man was revealed and the desperate wickedness of his heart laid bare. There it was shown that he was capable of the blackest of all crimes. Then let us not be surprised that the history of mankind is written in tears and blood.

2. I perceive here air *unveiling of sin*. Sin! that “abominable thing” which the Lord hates (Jer. 44:4), but which is regarded so lightly by those who commit it. Sin! which caused our first parents to be banished from Eden and which is responsible for all the want and woe that is in the world. Sin! which produces strife and bloodshed and has turned this “land of the living” into a mammoth cemetery. Sin! that hideous monster we so much dislike hearing about and which we are so ready to gloss over and excuse. Sin! over which Satan employs all his subtle arts to render attractive, setting it forth in the most appealing colours and winsome garbs. One of the great designs of the Incarnation was to bring to light the hidden things of darkness. The personal presence here of the Holy One acted like a brilliant light being turned on in a long-neglected room, revealing its squalor and filth. “If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin” (John 15:22).

In the passage just quoted Christ was speaking *comparatively*. Evil as man had shown himself all through his history, the coming of Immanuel to this earth brought sin to such a head that all that which had gone before was relatively but a trifling thing when compared with the monstrous wickedness which was done against Love incarnate. In the treatment which the Son of God received at the hands of men we see sin in its true colours, stripped of a disguise, exposed in its hideous reality, revealed in its true nature as contempt of God, rebellion against Him. Here at Calvary we behold the climax of sin and the fearful and horrible lengths to which it is capable of going. That which germinated in Eden culminated in the crucifixion. The first sin occasioned spiritual suicide, the second took the form of fratricide (Cain murdering his brother), but here at Calvary it issued in Deicide—the slaying of the Lord of Glory. We see also the fearful wages which sin pays—death, departure from God. Since Christ hung there as the Sin-bearer of all who believe

in Him, He received the punishment which was due unto them.

3. I perceive an *unveiling of the character of God*. The heavens declare His glory and the firmament shows His handiwork, but nowhere are His perfections more awfully and illustriously displayed than at the Cross. See here His *ineffable holiness*. The holiness of God is the delight He has in all that is pure and lovely, and therefore does His nature abominate and burn against whatever is evil. God hates sin wherever it is found and He made no exception of Christ when He beheld it lying by imputation upon His beloved Son. There God had “laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (Isa. 53:6)—that is, all His people—He dealt with Him accordingly, pouring out His holy wrath upon Him. God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity” (Hab. 1:13) and therefore did He turn His back upon the Sin-bearer. “My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?” the suffering Saviour cried, and then answered His own query: “Thou art holy” (Psa. 22:1, 3).

See here God's *inflexible justice*. The pronouncement of His Law is, “the soul that sinneth it shall die” (Ezek. 18:4), and no deviation from it can be made, for Jehovah has expressly declared that He, “will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo. 34:7). But will He not make an exception of that One whom He testifies is the Lamb “without spot and without blemish” (1 Peter 1:19)? No, for though Christ was sinless both by nature and by action yet because the sins of His people had been laid upon Him, God “spared not His own Son” (Rom. 8:32). Because sin was transferred to Him punishment must be visited upon Him, and therefore did God cry, “awake O sword against My Shepherd, against the Man that is My Fellow, saith the LORD of hosts, smite the Shepherd” (Zech. 13:7). God would not abate one iota of His righteous demand or allow sentiment to sully the fair face of His government. He claims to be par excellence the Judge who is “without respect of persons” and fully was that demonstrated at Calvary by refusing to exempt the Person of His Beloved, the One in whom His soul delighted (Isa. 42:1), when occupying the place of the guilty.

See here God's *amazing grace*. “God commendeth His love toward us (His people) in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Had He so pleased, God could have consigned the whole of Adam's race to everlasting woe. That is what each of us richly deserve. And why should He not do so? By nature we are depraved and corrupt; by practice incorrigible rebels—with no love for Him and no concern for His glory. But out of His own goodness and benignity He determined to save a people from their sin, to redeem them by Christ, “to the praise of the glory of His grace” (Eph. 1:6). He determined to pluck them as brands from the burning, that they might be the eternal monuments of His mercy. And because it was wholly outside of their power to make atonement for their fearful crimes, He Himself provided an all-sufficient Sacrifice for them. He is “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10) and innumerable tokens and proofs has He given of this, but nowhere were the “riches of His grace” so lavishly and so wondrously displayed as at Calvary.

See here God's *manifold wisdom*. The Word of Truth declares, “There shall in nowise enter into it anything that defileth, neither worketh abomination” (Rev. 21:27), then how is it possible that I can ever gain admittance into the heavenly Jerusalem? How can it be that one so completely devoid of righteousness as I am and so filled with unrighteousness could ever receive the Divine approbation? The Law says, “The soul that sinneth it shall die” and I have sinned and broken the Law—how then can I

escape its penalty? Since I am a spiritual pauper how can the necessary ransom be procured? Those are problems that no human intelligence can solve. Nor is the knot to be cut by an appeal to the bare mercy of God, for His mercy is not an attribute which overrides His justice and integrity. But at the Cross the Divine perfections shone out in glorious unity like the blending of the colours in the rainbow: there “mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other” (Psa. 85:10). God's justice was satisfied by Christ and therefore His mercy flows freely to all who repent and believe. God's grace reigns “through righteousness,” and Christ's blood can cleanse the foulest. The wisdom of God appears in creation and Providence but nowhere so grandly as at the Cross.

4. I see myself. What? Yes, as I turn my gaze to the Cross I behold myself, and so does each other who looks with the eyes of faith. Christ hung there as the Sponsor and Surety of His people, and there cannot be representation without identification—Christ identified with those whose sins He bears—believers identified with Him. In the sight of God they are one. Christ took my place and faith appropriates that fact. In the Person of my Substitute I satisfied every requirement of God's Law. In the Person of Christ I paid the full price which Divine justice demanded. In the Person of Christ I stand approved before God, for I am clothed with His meritorious perfections (Isa. 61:10). The whole ransomed Church of God can say of Christ, “He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities” (Isa. 53:5), “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body on the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). And faith individualizes it and declares, “I am crucified with Christ....who loved me and gave Himself *for me*” (Gal. 2:20). Hallelujah! What a Saviour.

### III . What do you see ?

I mean those of you who are unsaved. 1. You behold One whom you *despise and reject*. Perhaps you deny it, saying your attitude is merely negative—indifference. You err. If you are not the friend of Christ you are His enemy—there is no third class. “He that is not with Me is against Me” (Matt. 12:30) is His own verdict, and from that there is no appeal. You have despised His authority, flouted His laws, treated His claims with contempt. You reject His yoke and sceptre, refusing to be ruled by Him. Thus you unite with those who cast Him out and hounded Him to death.

2. You behold One who is *presented as Saviour*. Yes, despite your wicked treatment of Him hitherto. He is set before you in the Gospel as One willing and able to heal the wounds that sin has made and save your souls from eternal death. If you will throw down the weapons of your warfare against Him, surrender to His Lordship and trust in His redeeming blood, He will accept you now—“him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37). But if you refuse to do so, then—

3. You behold the One who is to be *your Judge*. Come to Him now as a repentant sinner, as a spiritual pauper, casting yourself upon His grace, and He will pardon your iniquities and give you a royal welcome. “Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28) is His own invitation and promise. But continue turning your back upon Him and He shall yet say to you, “Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels” (Matt. 25:41).

[A sermon—slightly revised—preached by the editor in Colorado in 1911.]

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

June, 1943

### **GOD GOVERNING THE NATIONS.**

“Repent ye, and believe the Gospel” (Mark 1:15): “repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 20:21). Unless there be both repentance and faith there is no forgiveness of sins for any soul, yet there are comparatively few passages in which both of them are expressly *mentioned*. In Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38 and 17:30 “repentance” alone is inculcated. In John 3:15; Romans 1:16 and 10:4 only “believing” is specified. Why is this? Because the Scriptures are not written as lawyers draw up documents, wherein terms are needlessly repeated and multiplied. Each passage of the Word must be interpreted in the light of and consistently with “the Analogy of Faith” (Rom. 12:6, Greek)—the general tenor of Scripture—and none made exceptional to the general rule. Thus concerning the above references: where only “repentance” is mentioned, “believing” is implied, and when “believing” is found alone, “repentance” is presupposed. The same principle applies to all other subjects: for example, prayer, “Ask, and ye shall receive” (Matt. 7:7) is not to be taken without qualification: if we are to “receive, we must “ask” *aright*—believingly (Heb. 11:6), according to God's will (1 John 5:14), in the name of Christ (John 14:13), and so on.

Our object in beginning with the above was to pave the way for an explanatory word on what was before us last month. Not a few have been puzzled over Jonah's positive and unqualified declaration, “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown” (3:4), for such an announcement of disaster appeared to hold out no hope of escape. This affords a striking example of the necessity for interpreting each passage in the light of and in harmony with the Analogy of Faith. Now it is one of the established maxims of Scripture

that where there is genuine repentance and reformation God will show mercy and stay His judgments. This is plainly stated in such places as Leviticus 26:40-42; 1 Kings 8:33-36, yet it is not formally expressed in every chapter or even every book. When God's Prophets were sent forth to announce judgments it was (except in extreme cases) with the proviso that the people threatened would be spared if they forsook their wickedness and returned to the paths of virtue. It was unnecessary to always *state* this because it was plainly revealed in the general rule.

Thus, when Jonah proclaimed the overthrow of Nineveh, though he specified not the *means* by which judgment could be arrested, yet they were understood—a reprieve would be granted if there were true repentance. Consequently his proclamation was no heralding of God's inexorable fiat but rather the sounding of an alarm which operated as a means of moral suasion. Had Nineveh obstinately persisted in her sins, she would certainly have been promptly overthrown; but because she ceased from being a city where every form of wickedness ran riot and became a place where the name of God was feared and His authority respected, her doom was averted. Jonah was not disclosing the Divine decree, but rather spoke ethically, addressing himself to human responsibility. And when it is said that, “God repented of the evil that He had said that He would do unto them,” He deigned to use a familiar form of speech. There was no change in His eternal purpose but an alteration in His *bearing* toward them because their conduct had changed for the better.

That our explanation of Jonah 3:4-10 is no mere plausible attempt or subtle device of getting out of a “tight place” should be quite evident from Jeremiah 18. “At what instant I should speak concerning a nation and concerning a kingdom to pluck up, and to pull down, and destroy it; *if* that nation against whom I have pronounced (not “decreed”!), turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them” (vv. 7, 8). Though the threat be genuine and the danger real, yet the announcement of judgment is not an absolute one, but *qualified*, and when the qualification is not expressed it is *implied*. The implied reserve that God will deal in mercy with those who genuinely put right that which displeases Him and will not destroy such was perceived and appealed to by Abram when he said, “That be far from Thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from Thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” (Gen. 18:25).

Even though no particular notice be taken of other passages and attention be entirely confined unto what is recorded in Jonah 3, will not the thoughtful reader be struck by the very terms of the Prophet's announcement: “Yet forty days and Nineveh shall be overthrown”? Had the guilt of Nineveh been so great and her course in evil so long confirmed, why was any intimation of her destruction at all necessary? If her doom was fixed, if God had purposed her overthrow, then why send one of His Prophets to declare the same? Further, why pronounce Nineveh's judgment almost six weeks before it should be executed? Ah, did not that very interval suggest that a door of hope stood open if her people would humble themselves and avail themselves of it? Was not that very interval an intimation of mercy in reserve? Was it not as much as though God said, “I gave her space to repent” (Rev. 2:21)? But if we compare Scripture with Scripture (and we are ever the losers by failing to do so) then the “forty days” confirms the conclusion we have drawn, for forty is the number which expresses probation and testing: see Deuteronomy 8:2-4; Acts 7:30; Matthew 4:2, etc.

How what above has been before us exemplifies the wondrous patience and forbearance of God! How it demonstrates that His anger is not like ours—a violent passion which ebbs and flows—but rather the calm and deliberate expression of His insulted holiness upon those who despise His authority and refuse to seek unto His mercy. God warns before He smites, expostulates ere He punishes, gives ample time and opportunity for an escape from His judgments. Enoch and Noah preached for many years before the flood destroyed the world. Prophet after Prophet was sent unto Israel before God banished them into captivity. Almost forty years passed after the Jews crucified their Messiah ere Jerusalem was razed to the ground. Well nigh six thousand years have gone since the Fall of our first parents, and yet human history has not closed! The Lord is “slow to anger,” yet that slowness is neither indifference to evil nor slackness in dealing with the same—rather is it a proof that He “bears with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath fitted to destruction.”

Still another purpose is served by the slowness of God unto anger and the interval between a nation's degeneracy and the execution of Divine judgment upon it, and that is, it serves to test more completely human responsibility and make manifest how richly deserved is the retribution which overtakes evildoers. If God's slowness to anger evidences His forbearance, how the general response of men thereto displays the inveteracy of their wickedness. “Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil” (Eccl. 8:11). Because God keeps silent they imagine He is altogether such an one as themselves (Psa. 50:21). “Let favour be shown to the wicked, yet will he not learn righteousness” (Isa. 26:10). Despising the riches of God's goodness and longsuffering, after the hardness of his impenitent heart, man treasures up unto himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom. 2:4, 5). And thus is it made apparent that he is “without excuse” and that his “damnation is just.”—A.W.P.

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June, 1943

### THE RISEN CHRIST AND THOMAS.

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came” (John 20:24). It is remarkable that one of the disciples should have been absent from the assembly on such an interesting occasion as when Christ appeared among them after His resurrection. What was the cause of his absence it would be worse than useless to conjecture. But the intention of Divine Providence in it is obvious. It was to display the natural unbelief, as to the things of God, that is in the heart of man; and to teach us the kind of evidence that God accounts sufficient for His saving Truth.

Why was one of the disciples absent? Why was this disciple Thomas? The narrative itself affords an answer to both questions. Divine Providence intended to give us a specimen of unbelief even in His own people. Thomas was peculiarly incredulous; therefore he was the person fitted to act the part designed for him on this occasion. If Thomas was afterwards convinced, there is no room left for captiousness to allege that the fact of Christ's resurrection was received by the disciples on slight grounds, without sufficient evidence and caution.

The unbelief of Thomas was unreasonable and sinful in a degree beyond expression. Why did he not believe the united testimony of the other Apostles? He should have received the testimony of any one of them. Unbelief justly exposed him to eternal condemnation. Has Thomas a license for unbelief more than any other of the human race? Must he not be liable to condemnation on the same ground with the rest of mankind? Must he be satisfied in his own whims with respect to the evidence of this fact? “Except I shall

see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nail and thrust my hand into His side, I will not believe.” Did ever any infidel express a more unreasonable demand for the evidence of Christ's resurrection and the truth of the Christian religion? The demands of skeptics are moderate and sober compared to this intemperance of unbelief. The most unreasonable of them demand only that a particular revelation of the Gospel should be made to every man. This falls far short of the extravagance of unreasonableness of the unbelief of Thomas.

But there is wisdom in this madness. If Thomas is unreasonable God uses his unreasonableness to effect a great purpose. By this means, in the satisfaction given to Thomas, we have the fact of the resurrection established on evidence beyond all suspicion. The possibility of delusion is removed; and the reality that it was Jesus whom the Apostles saw, rests not merely on the testimony of *their* eyes, but of the hands of the most unreasonable unbeliever that ever was in the world. Of all the infidels that ever existed, Thomas was the most extravagant. Voltaire and Hume are men of moderation compared to the prince of infidels. Nothing will satisfy this philosopher but the handling of the prints of the nails in his Master. Was it not possible that the risen body of Jesus should have had no scars? Was not this the most likely thing to be expected? That the Almighty power which could raise Him, could raise Him without a mark of His crucifixion? But Thomas was in all respects unreasonable that through this Jesus might exhibit Himself with evidence of His resurrection the most extravagant incredulity could presume to demand.

By this providential fact the Lord teaches us that His own disciples believe in Him not because they are naturally more teachable or less incredulous than others. It is God only who overcomes their unbelief. They are not only by nature the children of wrath even as others; but after they are brought to faith and life, the only security of their perseverance is the favour and love of God in Christ. They are kept by faith, and that faith is not of themselves, but is the gift of God. The strongest of all the disciples of Christ would not abide in the faith for a single day, if, like Peter or like Thomas, they were to be given up to their own unbelief. But if the strongest would not stand in their strength, the feeblest will not be plucked from the hand of the heavenly Father. After the fearful example of Peter and of Thomas, let no disciple of Christ trust in his own steadfastness. We are strong only when, seeing our own weakness, we have strength in the Rock of our salvation.

The world in general and philosophers in particular look upon Christians as a weak-minded people who are prone to believe without sufficient evidence. The man of science, even when he can find no fault with the man of God, still thinks himself justifiable in considering him as utterly below himself in mental powers. He thinks there must be a soft place in his head somewhere. The best that he can find to say is, that he is “an amiable enthusiast.” The Truth however, is far otherwise. Whether the believer is a man of strength of intellect, or feeble in mind, he would be equally an unbeliever with the most talented of his enemies, were he left to himself. Yea, the weakest would likely be the most presumptuous and rash, and blasphemous in the extravagance of their complaints against the Gospel. Thomas would not be behind Paine in the rashness of his demands and assertions. The Christian is made a little child by the Word and Spirit of God, but by nature he receiveth not the things of the Spirit, for they are to him, as well as to others, foolishness, until his eyes are opened to discover them, by the grace of God.

It is a matter of fact, worthy of particular attention, that the simplest of the men of God make a more

correct and more scientific estimate of the philosopher, than the philosopher can make of him. The philosopher, with all his knowledge, knows not God by his philosophy. He knows not, then, the correct and enlightened views of the man of God on the highest of all sciences. The philosopher, not appreciating the value of the soul, nor the amount of the unspeakable glory of the heavenly inheritance, as well as of the danger of overlooking condemnation, sees not the wisdom of the conduct of the man of God. He has no way to judge him but by himself; and therefore as he himself is wise, the other must be a fool. The pleasure of knowledge and the glory of fame are, with the philosopher, the very essence of the happiness of the third heavens. In all this, the man of God, even the weakest of them, can enter into the feelings and sentiments of the men of science, for, by nature, he is such a one himself. And he still finds, in his very best moments, that if he should lose sight of Heaven, and be left of God, he would make his paradise with the philosophers, or, at least, according to his taste, with some group of those who are, in different ways, in pursuit of earthly joys.

The Christian is not amazed that men seek the praise of man more than that of God; and that they pursue the things of this world rather than the things of God. He is rather amazed that God has turned himself out of this course, and enables him to resist the temptations which he daily meets in the world. To him there is no mystery in the character and choice of the philosopher, of the sensualist, of the men of the world. In them he sees himself as he is by nature. It is with new eyes that he sees spiritual things in a correct manner. "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man" (1 Cor. 2:14, 15). The Christian is the true philosopher. He not only has knowledge of the most sublime of all the sciences, of which the wise men of this world are as destitute as the wild ass of the wilderness, but he has that discernment of human views and character which human wisdom never has attained. The Christian knows the philosopher better than the philosopher knows himself. Of all the sciences, the science of mind is the most sublime; and Christians have a knowledge of the mind of man which no mere philosopher can obtain by his art. The philosopher gives an account of himself and of others, and of his own notions and views which every Christian can detect as delusive and unreal.

In this providential fact we see the forbearance and condescension of Christ to His people, even when they are unreasonable. He graciously removes the doubts of Thomas, though He might justly have left him to perish in his presumptuous unbelief. From this we may be assured that, in one way or other the Lord will remove the doubts of His people with respect to the evidence of the Gospel. He will not give them that evidence which extravagance many rashly demand, He will keep them from such extravagance, or remove their doubts by opening their eyes to understand the proper evidence. This will be the same thing with presenting to their view and to their touch His hands and His side. He will assuredly overcome the unbelief and hardness of heart of the most obstinate of His chosen ones.

If He were not provoked to give up Thomas, His patience cannot meet with a more extravagant case of incredulity. He could call a Saul of Tarsus in the midst of his furious enmity to Him, and He did overcome the unbelief of the incredulous and obstinate Thomas. What a consolation is this for the believer! What thoughts of unbelief arise in the heart! And how Satan could perplex the mind of the highest saint on earth, none but the believer can have any conception of. If we were for a few minutes, from a state of the most

assured faith, to be given into the hands of Satan to sift us as wheat, how would our faith fail us! Who knows what effect the fiery darts of the wicked one would have upon our minds, if they were not quenched? And quenched they cannot be but on the shield of faith: and in the case God permits that faith to fail—what then, will support us? How shall we without dismay look into an eternal world? But though God may for a moment suffer us to be tried by the tempter, He will not suffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation make a way of escape, that we may be able to bear it. Our constant prayer to God ought to be that He would not give us into the hands of Satan, or that He will continue to give us the shield of faith.

In matters of so great moment, the mind, particularly at death, naturally looks for and wishes every evidence of the Truth, and sometimes demands unreasonable evidence. Nothing but the blood of Jesus should be before our eye and we should always remember that we glorify God, not by doubting, but by believing His Word. Were not Christ present with His people in the time of their trial, and especially at the time of their death, nothing could deliver them from horror. That they are not only saved from fear, but enabled to rejoice and triumph in death, is the surest evidence that the Gospel is true. It is not surprising that persons ignorant of the character of God, of their own character and of the consequences of sin, should be stupidly unconcerned at death. But the Christian knows too much to be kept from the very agonies of Hell if he had not the life of Heaven, when he passes through the dark valley and shadow of death. In the removal of the doubts of reason, let us gain confidence that the Lord will not forsake us in the time of our need. To a Christian, who is deeply acquainted with his own weakness, Hell itself is not a greater object of horror than to be given up without assistance from God, to wrestle with the prince of this world at the hour of death.

It is remarkable that the Lord, though He complied with the unreasonable demand for evidence in the case of Thomas, yet He would not listen to the request of the rich man in Hell, for the conviction of his relations on earth. “Then he said, I pray thee, therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house; for I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them lest they also come into this place of torment” (Luke 16:27, 28). Did Abraham yield to the proposal and admire the plan? No. “Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent. And he said unto him, if they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead” (vv. 29-31). Our skeptics are still calling for more or better evidence. If the Gospel is true, they allege it should have evidence against which no man could find objection. Let them alone. Press on them the evidence that God has given of the truth of His Gospel. If they believe not this, it will be found, in the Day of Judgment, that they have not rejected it from its own insufficiency, but from their own enmity to the Truth. Testimony is a sufficient ground of evidence; and if they reject the testimony of God by His Apostles, they will justly perish.

And the same thing will hold true with respect to the denial of the testimony of God with regard to any particular doctrine or part thereof. The enemies of the doctrine, or fact recorded, will allege a want of proof; and, on the authority of philosophical doctrines, will take on them to modify the testimony of God. They make the dogmas of human science an authority paramount to the testimony of God in the Scriptures. This is the boldness, the blasphemy of infidelity. If God has given His testimony on any part, it is evidence paramount in authority to every other. To prove the truth alleged on such authority, nothing is

necessary but to show that it is the result of the fair exposition of the laws of language. Let God be true, and let all men be liars. Against the testimony of God the philosopher is not to be heard more than a convicted perjurer. Our Lord, even though, for His own wise purposes, indulged Thomas, yet did not approve of his unbelief, nor of his demand.

He did not ascribe his incredulity to greater talents or greater caution, or greater concern about the Truth, than were discovered by his brethren. On the contrary, He shows that they rather are blessed who will believe without such evidence as Thomas demanded. There are two extremes, equally to be avoided, into which men are prone to fall. Some believe without evidence, believe against all evidence, believe what all evidence, capable of being submitted to the mind of men, shows to be absurd and impossible. On the other hand, there are some who unreasonably refuse evidence that is sufficient, evidence which God has pronounced sufficient, and look on themselves as manifesting greater intellect or greater wisdom in demanding evidence of another kind which God has not appointed. “Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, yet have believed.”—Alexander Carson.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1943

### SOLOMON'S TEMPLE.

[What follows is not designed for the careless and casual reader who hurriedly skims these pages merely to ascertain what is in them, but for refined minds that can appreciate the sublime and who will deem themselves well repaid for re-reading this piece more slowly and thoughtfully. We can say this the more freely inasmuch as it is no composition of ours—nor is our pen capable of reaching such heights—but rather that of one who wrote almost two centuries ago: James Hervey, a rector in a small parish in Northamptonshire. No one denomination can claim a monopoly of God's most faithful and eminent servants, nor have they been confined to Nonconformity. Some of His choicest ministers were bestowed upon the Church of England, as such men as Toplady, Berridge, John Newton, and a host of others since them prove.]

With immense charge and exquisite skill Solomon had erected the most rich and finished structure that the sun ever saw. Yet, upon a review of his work and a reflection on the transcendent perfections of the Godhead, how he exalts the one and abases the other! The building was too glorious for the mightiest monarch to inhabit, too sacred for unhallowed feet even to enter, yet infinitely too mean for the Deity to reside in. It was, and the royal worshipper acknowledged it to be, a most marvellous vouch-safement in uncreated excellency to “put His Name there.” The whole passage breathes such a delicacy and is animated with such a sublimity of sentiment: “But will God indeed dwell on earth? Behold! the Heaven and Heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee, how much less this house that I have builded!” (1 Kings 8:27).

“But will”—a fine abrupt beginning, most significantly describing the amazement and rapture of the royal Prophet's mind. “*God*”: he uses no epithet, where writers of inferior discernment would have multiplied them; but speaks of the Deity as an incomprehensible Being, whose perfections and glories are exalted above all praise. “Dwell”—to bestow on sinful creatures a propitious look, to favour them with a transient visit of kindness, even this were an unutterable obligation. Will He then vouchsafe to *fix* His abode among them and take up His stated residence with them? “Indeed”—a word in this connection peculiarly emphatic, expressive of a condescension, wonderful and extraordinary almost beyond all credibility. “Behold”!—intimating the continued, or rather the increasing surprise of the speaker, and awakening the attention of the hearer. “Behold! the Heaven”—the spacious concave of the firmament: that wide extended azure circumference, in which worlds unnumbered perform their revolutions, is too scanty an apartment for the Godhead. “Nay: the Heaven of heavens”—those vastly higher tracts, which lie far beyond the limits of human survey, to which our very thoughts can hardly soar; even these (unbounded as they are) cannot afford an adequate Habitation for Jehovah; even these dwindle into a point when compared with the Infinite of His Essence; even these “are as nothing before *Him*.” “How much less”—proportionate is this poor diminutive speck (which I have been erecting and embellishing) to so august a Presence, so immense a Majesty!

We are apt to be struck with admiration at the stateliness and grandeur of a masterful performance in architecture. And perhaps on a sight of the ancient sanctuary should have made the superficial observation of the disciples: “What manner of stones!” and “what buildings are here!” But what a nobler turn of thought and more just plane of things does it discover to join with Israel's king in celebrating the condescension of the Divine Inhabitant! That the high and lofty One who fills immensity with His glory, should, in a peculiar manner fix His abode there! Should there manifest an extraordinary degree of His benedictive Presence, permit sinful mortals to approach His Majesty, and promise “To make them joyful in His house of Prayer!” This should more sensibly affect our hearts than the most curious arrangement of stones can delight our eyes

Nay, the everlasting God does not disdain to dwell in *our souls* by His Holy Spirit, and to make even our *bodies* His temple! Tell me, ye that frame critical judgments and balance nicely the distinction of things, Is this most astonishing or most rejoicing? He humbleth Himself, the Scriptures assure us, ever to behold the things that are in Heaven (Psa. 113:6). 'Tis a most condescending favour if HE pleases to take the least approving notice of angels and archangels when they bow down in homage from their celestial thrones. Will He then graciously regard, will He be united, most intimately united to poor polluted man, breathing dust?—unparalleled honour! invaluable privilege! Be *this* my portion, and I shall not covet crowns nor envy conquerors.

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### **GOD'S VOICE IN JUDGMENTS.**

“Now therefore go to, speak to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, Thus saith the LORD; Behold, I frame evil against you, and devise a device against you: return ye now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good” (Jer. 18:11). As the “therefore” denotes, practical application is here made of what has been before us in the context. The Prophet had been called upon to witness an object-lesson set before him in the potter's house. Then the Lord had made known to him the relations which He sustains unto nations, viz., Sovereign, Ruler and Judge over them, and the principles which regulate His dealings with them: authority and power, righteousness and mercy. A specific yet illustrative example of such is here shown us . . . Israel had long provoked God to His face, and though He had been slow to anger, the time had now arrived when He would take them to task and deal with them for their wickedness. The dark clouds of His wrath were suspended over them, yet even at this late hour if they genuinely departed from their evil ways and walked the paths of virtue, mercy should “rejoice against judgment.”

God speaks to us not only through His word (both personal and written) but also through His works and ways. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth His handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night showeth knowledge. There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world” (Psa. 19:1-4). Creation testifies to the excellencies of the Creator. The Divine providences, too, are vocal: “I spake unto thee in thy prosperity” (Jer. 22:21)—My bounties declared My goodness and should have

melted your hearts. God's judgments also carry with them a definite message: that is why we are exhorted to “hear ye the rod, and who hath appointed it” (Micah 6:9)—observe how the verse opens with “the LORD'S voice crieth unto the city.” His “rod” bids us consider the Hand that wields it and calls upon us to forsake our sins.

When God speaks in judgment it is the final warning that He is not to be trifled with. When the Almighty is roused to fury who can stand before Him? Nations are no more able to successfully resist Him than can the clay hinder the fingers of the potter who shapes it; yea they are counted as “the small dust of the balance” (Isa. 40:15), which signifies utter insignificance. May we exclaim, “who would not fear Thee, O King of nations!” (Jer. 10:7). No spiritual warrant whatever has any people to put their trust in human greatness, the sire of their armies, the excellency of their equipment, the strength of their defenses. God has but to blow upon them and they are immediately overthrown, entirely demolished. Mark how this is emphasized in Jeremiah 18, “At what *instant* I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to pull down and to destroy it” (v. 7): it is done in a moment—suddenly, swiftly, invincibly.

“Behold I frame evil against you.” It is the evil of punishment about to be inflicted on the evil of sin. It is no momentary outburst of uncontrollable anger, but dispassionate and deliberated retribution, and when the almighty “frames” or devises that evil against a kingdom, no power can deliver it. Though Lucifer himself says, “I will ascend above the heights of the cloud: I will be like the Most High” (Isa. 14:14), yet is his proud boast seen to be an empty one, for the Lord says, “yet thou shalt be brought down to Hell, to the sides of the Pit” (v. 15). “Damascus is waxed feeble and turneth herself to flee, and fear hath seized on her: anguish and sorrows have taken her as a woman in travail” (Jer. 49:24)—suddenly, sorely, irresistibly, from which there is no escape. How this should make the wicked to tremble and depart from their evil ways! God turneth “a fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein” (Psa. 107:34).

“Behold *I* frame evil against you.” Calamities and judgments come not by chance, nor are they originated by inferior agents or secondary causes. Though He may be pleased to make use of human instruments, yet the Lord is the Author of and principal Agent in them. Before the Assyrians fell upon apostate Israel Jehovah declared, “I will send him against a hypocritical nation, and against the people of My wrath will I give him a charge, to take the spoil, and to take the prey, and to tread them down like the mire of the streets” (Isa. 10:6). The Lord moved him, though he was in no wise conscious of any Divine impulse or commission. And when God had finished making use of the Babylonians and raised up the Medes and Persians to humiliate them into the dust, He declared of Cyrus “thou art *My* battle-axe and weapons of war: for with thee will I break in pieces the nations, and with thee will I destroy kingdoms” (Jer. 51:20). Cyrus was as truly God's “servant” as Moses or any of the Prophets: see Isaiah 45:1; Ezra 1:1. Curses as much as blessings, calamities as much as boons, judgments as truly as favours proceed from the Almighty, and it is but a species of atheism to deny the fact.

“Behold I frame evil against you.” How this word needs to be pressed upon this evil and adulterous generation, which is occupied with anyone and anything rather than the living God. In a land where Bibles are so plentiful we are without excuse when we look no higher than the agencies now threatening us. Yea,

it is a grievous sin for us to throw the blame of our present trials and troubles upon human instruments instead of upon our national iniquities, and refuse to see *God* employing those instruments against us. Hitler is but a scourge in the hand of the Almighty. Nor are they helping any to fix their gaze on the supreme Framer of Evil who constantly direct attention to the machinations of the pope and his longing to see the British empire destroyed. Doubtless the papacy was behind the entrance of Italy into active conflict and the perfidy of France, as she is responsible for Eire's refusal to grant us naval bases, of Vichy's steady opposition, of the French Canadian's disloyalty, and of many other hostile factors and forces; but *who* is permitting the “Mother of Harlots” to employ her powerful influence thus? None other than the Lord of Hosts. He is righteously using Rome as a rod on the back of an apostate Protestantism.

We cannot expect the unbelieving nations to look beyond Hitler and his fellows, but it is the privilege of Christians to “look unto *the LORD*” (Micah 7:7). It is the very nature of faith to be occupied with its Author. It is the duty of faith to “set the LORD always before” it (Psa. 16:8). When the Ammonites and Moabites came up against Judah, Jehoshaphat turned unto God and said, “we have no might against this great company that come against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are *upon Thee*” (2 Chron. 20:12). This is the first message to His own people which the voice of the Lord has in His judgments: look above the human scourges and behold *My* hand in righteous retribution. And it is the business of God's servants at such a time to urge upon the saints to “consider in thine heart that the LORD He is God in Heaven above and upon the earth beneath: there is none else” (Deut. 4:39). O that it may be the experience of both writer and reader—“Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the heavens” (Psa. 123:1) and then shall we prove for ourselves “they looked unto Him, and were lightened” (Psa. 34:5).—A.W.P.

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July, 1943

### **THE DESTRUCTION OF DAGON.** (SERIES PART 1)

The opening chapters of the first book of Samuel bring before us some sad incidents, making evident the deplorable condition into which the favoured Nation had fallen, for they treat of a portion of that time covered by the Book of Judges, when “in those days there was no king in Israel; every man did that which was right in his own eyes” (21:25). First, we have Hannah, in bitterness of soul praying unto and weeping before the Lord, and Eli the high priest so lacking in discernment as to suppose she was drunk (Chap. 1). Concerning Eli's sons we read that they were “sons of Belial” who “knew not the LORD” (2:12). Though engaged in the sacred office of the priesthood, they conducted themselves in a most horrible manner. First, we are told that they misappropriated for their own use portions of the sacrifices, for they “abhorred the offering of the LORD” (2:13-17), thereby being guilty of the fearful sin of sacrilege. Moreover, they committed immorality, and that at the very “door of the tabernacle” (2:22). Later, we find the Lord making known unto their father (2:27-34) and unto Samuel (3:11-14) the judgment which He would execute upon the house of Eli.

“And the word of Samuel came to all Israel. Now Israel went out against the Philistines to battle, and pitched beside Ebenezer: and the Philistines pitched in Aphek. And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel: and when they joined battle, Israel was smitten before the Philistines: and they slew of the army in the field about four thousand men” (1 Sam. 4:1-2). Jehovah was no longer fighting for His people, and without Him they suffered defeat at the hands of the enemy. The Lord will not show Himself strong

on the behalf of those who displease and dishonour Him. As He announced through one of His Prophets at a later date, “The LORD is with you while ye be with Him: and if ye seek Him He will be found of you; but if ye forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2 Chron. 15:2). The same principle is repeated in the New Testament: James 4:8-10.

“And when the people were come into the camp, the elders of Israel said, Wherefore hath the LORD smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us fetch the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of Shiloh unto us, that, when it cometh among us, it may save us out of the hand of our enemies” (1 Sam 4:3). See here the blindness and the folly of the religious leaders. They were oblivious to the fact that the nation was ripe for judgment, and refused to consider that the defeat which had just been experienced was a call from the Lord unto humiliation, repentance and reformation. How absurd the expedient suggested. True, wonders had indeed happened in the past when the ark had gone before the people, but it had been by the Divine command the sacred coffer was in the vanguard, and not at the caprice of men. Tokens of the Lord's power were granted at a time when the nation, generally speaking, was walking in obedience to Him, and not when He was being openly defied. Those things made all the difference.

The expedient resorted unto by those “elders” has often been repeated in principle. There has usually been a large proportion of those who nominally profess to be the people of God, that are so deluded as to believe no matter how sinful and worldly their lives be, they are entitled unto Divine help. Total strangers to vital godliness, supposing that a half-hearted attention to external forms will satisfy the Lord, in the hour of emergency they call upon Him in hope. To indulge the conceit because a “day of prayer” is appointed for a people who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4), He will promptly put forth His mighty arm on their behalf, is the modern parallel to Israel's making an idol of the ark and concluding it would save them from their enemies. Rightly did Thomas Scott say of those hypocrites, they “dishonoured Him more in attending of His ordinances than they could do by neglecting them, so that He abhors those services for which they expect His favour.” Let the reader ponder such passages as Isaiah 29:13-14; Malachi 1:12-14.

“So the people sent to Shiloh (where the tabernacle then abode) that they might bring from thence the ark of the covenant of the LORD of Hosts, which dwelleth between the cherubim: and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were there with the ark of the covenant of God” (1 Sam. 4:4). What a spectacle: that which symbolized the throne of Jehovah in Israel's midst being borne by these sons of Belial! But have no unholy men handled the sacred things of Christ during the past fifty years? Are there no Hophnies and Phinehases in Christendom today? Are the Scriptures never publicly read, prayers made, the ordinances of Christian Baptism and the Lord's Supper administered, by men whose beliefs and ways evince that they “abhor the offering of the Lord”? Well did Thomas Scott say of Eli's sons, “being hardened to their destruction, they were left to venture presumptuously into the holy of holies and to carry the ark into the army and thus, without any proper call, they were found within the reach of the sword of the Philistines, by which they were destined to be destroyed.”

“And when the ark of the covenant of the LORD came into the camp all Israel shouted with a great shout, so that the earth rang again” (v. 5). How much seeming zeal there is for the ark of the Lord while the Lord of the ark is despised! Poor deluded souls; like parched travelers in the desert having false hopes raised by

a mirage of water. Mistaking the shadow for the substance, they thought that all would now be well with them. Their shouting was but the infatuation of the flesh and not an inspiration of the Spirit. It went beyond what our moderns would term “wishful thinking”: it was heralding the victory before the enemy was so much as engaged. Carried away by an act of awful presumption they gave expression to hilarious joy as though they had already triumphed over the Philistines. Has mankind become any wiser with the passing of the centuries? Is our own “enlightened generation” too discreet to count their chickens before they are hatched? It hardly looks like it with all this ambitious and utopian post-war planning.

“And when the Philistines heard the noise of the shout they said, What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews? And they understood that the ark of the LORD was come into the camp. And the Philistines were afraid; for they said, God is come into the camp: And they said, Woe unto us! for there hath not been such a thing heretofore” (vv. 6, 7). Such ignorance and superstition was excusable on the part of the Philistines. They had heard something of the wonders which the God of Israel had wrought for His people in the past, and as they listened to the acclamations of the Hebrews they were filled with dismay. But not for long. Their leaders called upon them to, “Be strong and quit you like men, O ye Philistines, that ye be not servants unto the Hebrews, as they have been to you: quit yourselves like men and fight” (v. 9). It was not the “fear of the Lord” but only a fleeting natural alarm which had overtaken them, and they quickly threw it off. Had Jehovah actually been with Israel how different things would have been.

“And the Philistines fought and Israel was smitten, and they fled every man to his tent: and there was a very great slaughter, for there fell of Israel thirty thousand footmen. And the ark of God was taken, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, were slain” (vv. 10, 11). Israel had regarded the ark as a fetish—as many now consider a meaningless “mascot” or a golden “cross” which has been “blest” by some Papist, will afford its possessor protection in the hour of danger—but it availed them not when the enemy struck. They had given a premature shout of victory, but now their army suffered a sevenfold worse defeat than the previous one. The sons of the high priest had personally accompanied the sacred coffer, and now they lay cold in death. God's threats are not idle words, but sure predictions of what is in store for evil-doers. The fearful judgments which had been announced to Eli and Samuel were now literally executed. And, my reader, each of us, individually, and the nation to which we belong, has to do with the same God. He will not be mocked with impunity. Though He be slow to anger, yet His wrath is the more terrible when it does strike.

Tidings of this fearful disaster were speedily conveyed unto the high priest. He was seated by the wayside in sore suspense, “For his heart trembled for the ark of God” (v. 13). When the news was broken to him, it was too much for the aged Eli, so that he “fell from off the seat backward by the side of the gate and his neck was broken and he died” (v. 18). His daughter-in-law was in childbirth and when she learned of the national catastrophe and the death of her father-in-law and husband, she, too, expired, but not until after naming her son “Ichabod” saying “the glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken” (vv. 19-22). It may strike some as strange that God suffered the ark to fall into the hands of the Philistines, but considering all the circumstances it had surely been much more strange had His *blessings* attended the superstitious expediency of the rebellious Israelites.—A.W.P.

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### **GOD'S VOICE IN JUDGMENTS.**

“Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I frame evil against you and devise a device against you” (Jer 18:11). That is the language of God unto a kingdom whose overthrow is threatened by His judgments, to whom the dispensations of his providence announce impending ruin. The dark clouds of calamity overhead testify to God's disapproval of a nation's sins. Under such solemn presages of the impending storm of Divine wrath proud spirits ought to be tamed and the masses brought to realize what a vain thing it is to fight against the Almighty and how fearful are the consequences of flouting His authority and treading underfoot His laws. The effects of evil doing are termed by the Spirit “gall and wormwood,” but it is not until God brings a nation into external miseries they are made to realize the truth thereof. “Thine own wickedness shall correct thee and thy backsliding shall reprove thee: know therefore and see that it is an evil and bitter thing that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God and that My fear is not in thee, saith the Lord of hosts” (Jer 2:19).

“Behold, I frame evil against you.” The speaker is the Most High and “none can stay His hand or say unto Him what doest thou?” He framed evil against the antediluvians. “The earth was filled with violence...all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth” (Gen 6:11,12). Warnings of impending doom were given by Enoch (Jude 14,15) and Noah, but none heeded. Then the storm burst: “all the fountains of the great deep were broken up, and the windows of heaven opened” (Gen 7:11). And what could men do to help themselves? Nothing whatever. God “framed evil” against Sodom and Gomorrah and what could their inhabitants do when He “rained fire and brimstone” upon them (Gen 18:24). They were powerless to withstand it. God “framed evil” against Egypt. Her haughty monarch exclaimed “who is the Lord that I

should obey His voice?” (Exo 5:2), but discovered that He was not to be defied with impunity when He “took off their chariot wheels” and drowned him and his hosts in the Red Sea.

When the Almighty sends a devastating earthquake, what can puny man do? When He withholds the rain and famine ravages a land, who can resist Him? When He visits with a pestilence which cuts off millions in the prime of life, as the “flu” did in 1918, who can say Him nay? When He unleashes the dreadful hounds of war, who can turn them back? Is there, then, no hope? Yes, if the masses will truly humble themselves beneath the Hand that has begun to smite them. God's judgments are articulate: they call upon all to throw down the weapons of their high-handed rebellion against Heaven. God takes away their peace and comforts that they may put away their idols. Calamities are sent upon evil-doers that they should depart from their wickedness. God is able to destroy the mightiest kingdom in the twinkling of an eye, but usually He spreads His judgments over a period, as in the ten plagues upon Egypt, granting space for repentance and allowing an interval between the announcement of His having “framed evil,” and the actual and full execution thereof.

Thus it is here in Jeremiah 18:11: after declaring He had devised a device against a nation God adds, “Return ye now everyone from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.” Conversion ought to be the immediate outcome of God's judgments, whether they be threatened or in actual course of fulfillment. If men would forsake their sins God would soon lay aside His rod. But observe the urgency of the Call: “return ye *now* every one from his evil way.” There is no time for delay: God will not be trifled with. Men are very prone to procrastinate: they put off the day of repentance and defer their reformation. They hope and resolve, yet postpone the same, and the longer they do so the harder their hearts become and the more completely the Devil obtains possession of them. Agrippa was “almost persuaded,” but that was as far as he went: his lusts held him fast. “*Today* if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts” (Psa 95:7): if ever there was a time when it was imperative to heed that exhortation it is now.

“And they said, There is no hope” (Jer 18:12). There are three possible interpretations of those words. First, they may be regarded as the language of despair: there is no hope for us *in God*, we have sinned beyond the reach of mercy. But that would necessarily presuppose they were deeply convicted of their guilt, and the remainder of the verse definitely precludes any such concept. Second, “there is no hope” might be the language of confessed helplessness. There is no hope in us: we are too besotted to reform, too wedded to our sins to break from them; but the remainder of the verse is flatly against this too. Third, “there is no hope” was the language of blatant defiance. There is no hope *for you*: it is useless to preach to us, our minds are fully made up, we are determined to have our own way, and nothing you say can change us. “We will walk after our own devices and we will every one do the imagination of his evil heart” they declared. It was the language of open rebellion, whether expressed in words or in deeds.

That this is the obvious meaning of their “there is no hope” is clear not only from the words which immediately follow but also from other passages in Jeremiah. “But they hearkened not nor inclined their ear, but walked in the counsels and in the imagination of their evil heart, and went backward and not forward” (7:24); “thou saidst, *I will not hear*: this hath been thy manner from thy youth that thou obeyedst not My voice” (22:21 and see 44:16,17). They declined to be affected by the heavy clouds of judgment over their heads. They refused to forsake their evil ways. They were determined to persist in their

disobedience. They openly defied the Almighty. They were impervious to all expostulations and admonitions. Their hearts were fully set in them to drink their fill of iniquity. “For the people turneth not unto Him that smiteth them neither do they seek the Lord of Hosts” (Isa 9;13). “Thou hast stricken them, but they have not grieved; Thou hast consumed them, but they have refused to receive correction; they have made their faces harder than a rock” (Jer 5:3).

“We will walk after our own devices.” We are quite resolved to continue in sin, and no preaching can change us. We are fully determined to do so, no matter what it may cost us. Of old God sent a shortage of food on Israel, but it produced no reformation: “yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.” He smote them with blasting and mildew so that their gardens and vineyards were destroyed, but it moved them not: “yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.” He sent pestilence among them and slew their young men, but they continued impenitent: “yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord.” He destroyed some of them by fire, but they persisted in their sins: “yet have ye not returned unto Me, saith the Lord” (Amos 4:6-10). And history has repeated itself! It is still doing so before our very eyes. The perversity of ancient Israel finds its counterpart in the contumacy of modern Christendom. God has given Britain “space to repent,” alas, it has to be added “and she *repented not*” (Rev 2:21), nor is their the slightest indication she will yet do so. AWP

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

August, 1943

### **DAGON DESTROYED.**

We resume at the point where we left off: “And she said, The glory is departed from Israel, for the ark of God is taken” (1 Sam 4:22). Such was the dying lament of the daughter-in-law of Eli, the high priest of Israel. The sacred chest, the lid of which was “the mercy-seat” that constituted the throne of Jehovah in the midst of His people and where the Shekinah glory abode, had been removed from its appointed place in the holy of holies and conducted to the field of battle, in the hope that it would overthrow the enemies of the Hebrews. But their presumptuous expectation had not been realized. So far from it, Israel had been utterly routed, the sons of the high priest slain, and the ark of the covenant captured by the Philistines. Before expiring, the daughter-in-law of Eli named the son to which she had just given birth “Ichabod,” saying “the glory is departed from Israel.” The name of her son memorialized the fearful catastrophe which had overtaken the favoured nation, and described the spiritual desolation which had fallen upon it.

That which is described in 1 Samuel 4 is something more than an historical event which happened in the remote past: it illustrated and adumbrated certain basic and unchanging principles in the governmental dealings of God, which have been made manifest again and again in the course of history. Subsequently the ark of the covenant was restored to Israel and when Solomon erected the temple and the ark was set in its appointed place we are told that “the cloud [the Shekinah] filled the house of the Lord, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for *the glory* of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord” (1 Kings 8:10,11). But history repeated itself: the Lord was again despised, those who bore His name trampled upon His law, conformed to the ways of the heathen, worshipped false gods, and refused to

heed the expostulations of His prophets. Carnality and idolatry became rampant, and though God bore long with the waywardness of his people, giving many warnings and solemn threatenings before He smote them in His wrath, the time eventually came when His awful vengeance fell.

Nearly four hundred years after Solomon the Lord delivered Israel into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, many being carried away to Babylon: yet even that calamity produced no national repentance. Among the captives was Ezekiel and if we turn to his prophecies we obtain light on the spiritual situation as it then existed, particularly in connection with the departure of the Shekinah—the visible and awe-inspiring emblem of Jehovah's presence in the midst of Israel. In chapter 8 we find the prophet brought in vision “to Jerusalem” and he tells us “Behold, the glory of the God of Israel was there” (v 4). In 9:9 we find Jehovah complaining “The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceeding great, and the land is full of blood, and the city full of perverseness.” Then in 10:4 we read “the glory of the Lord went up from the cherubim and stood over the threshold of the house,” and in 10:18 “the glory of the Lord departed from off the threshold of the house.” Finally, in 11:23 we are told, “The glory of the Lord went up from the midst of the cherubim and stood upon the mount which is upon the east side of the city.” Slowly and gradually as though reluctant to leave, the Shekinah glory had departed and once more “Ichabod” described their sad state.

There is no intimation that the Shekinah ever returned unto Israel during the remainder of the OT period. Another temple was built in the days of Ezra and Nehemiah, and though God owned it as His house yet nothing is said of “the glory of the Lord filling it.” But at the beginning of the NT era something yet more wonderful and blessed took place. As John declares in his Gospel, “The Word was made [or “became”] flesh and dwelt [“tabernacled”] among us, and we beheld *His glory*—the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father—full of grace and truth” (1:14). Once again Israel was put upon trial: their long-promised Messiah appeared in their midst, making unmistakable demonstration of His divine credentials. He preached to them the Gospel, went about doing good, healed their sick. But they had no heart for Him. He bade them repent, but they refused. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not. They despised and rejected Him. Then it was He said unto them “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killest the prophets and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not. Behold your house is *left* unto you *desolate*” (Matt 23:37,38). Once again “Ichabod” was written over Israel.

Has the above no meaning and message for us? Is the history of Christendom without anything approaching a parallel? A literal duplication, not but something strictly analogous, yes. The outstanding characteristic of this dispensation and the climacteric gift of God unto His people is the presence of the Holy Spirit in their midst. That brings before us a many-sided theme, but we must confine ourselves unto that which is germane to our present inquiry. The Spirit of God indwells the Church corporately and the saint individually. He sustains a special relation to the servants of Christ, enduing them with power and making their labours fruitful. Normally, He is therefore in the midst of “Christendom,” that is, the whole body of Christian profession, for even the unregenerate are made “partakers” of His presence and blessings while in outward fellowship with the saints (Heb 6:4), as they are bidden to “hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 3:22) and hence they are guilty of doing “despite unto the Spirit of grace” (Heb 10:29) when they refuse to hear Him and apostatize from their profession.

It is to be noted that one of our statements in the above paragraph is qualified: under *normal* conditions the Spirit of God is in the midst of Christendom generally and in the local churches (which have always contained a mixture of believers and unbelievers) particularly. But because He is the *Holy* Spirit He may be “grieved” (Eph 4:30) and “quenched” (1 Thess 5:19). He is “grieved” by the individual Christian when his conversation is unbecoming, and then He withholds His comforts. He is “quenched” or put out by the corporate body when His ministrations are “despised” (1 Thess 5:20), that is, when unbelievers are allowed to predominate in the local assembly, or if it becomes carnal and worldly, or if false doctrine be tolerated, or if a Scriptural discipline be not maintained. Any impartial reader of ecclesiastical history is aware that at various periods the Spirit was “quenched” and His power and blessing withdrawn from Christendom as a whole. Only those who are determined to call bitter sweet and darkness light, or who apply a wrong standard of measurement, will take exception to that assertion.

The Holy Spirit was certainly “quenched” at the beginning of the fourth century, when Constantine adopted Christianity as the state religion, when the simplicity of spiritual worship was superceded by an imposing and elaborate ritual, when those who professed to be “strangers and pilgrims” in this scene (1 Peter 2:11) sought after worldly prestige and emoluments and when vast multitudes were compelled to be “baptized” at the point of the sword. The insignificant minority who had eyes to see were painfully conscious that God had written “Ichabod” over Christendom, that the Holy Spirit, grieved and quenched, had withdrawn, no longer working in their midst. True, God still maintained unto Himself a “remnant”—raising up an isolated witness for Himself here and there, and little companies of His people meeting in secret for prayer and the ministry of the Word; but the collective system, the corporate body, was indeed a House now left unto them “desolate,” as was evident from the “dark ages” which followed, when Rome completely dominated things.

It is not our purpose now to review the whole past nineteen centuries and trace the revivals and declensions that have followed each other: rather would we come much closer to our own times and observe the present application of what has been before us above. One has only to read the writings of C. H. Spurgeon—perhaps God's most valuable gift unto His people since the days of the Puritans—from 1880-1890 to discover the terrible departure from the truth and practical godliness which had taken place even then. Plainly and pointedly did that faithful minister denounce the “Downgrade Movement” in the churches, and when the leaders refused to right things, withdrew his “tabernacle” from the “Baptist Union.” During 1890-1910, which falls within the memory of this writer, the decline accelerated rapidly: there was scarcely a theological seminary in Germany, Britain or the USA, which was not a hotbed of heresy. Ministers vied with each other in preaching “higher criticism,” the “evolutionary hypothesis” and the so-called “new theology,” and only here and there was a feeble voice raised in outcry.

In thousands of instances “churches” became little better than social clubs and places of entertainment. Well do we remember, some forty-odd years ago, the innovation and popularization of the “Pleasant Sunday afternoon” services, when worldly vocalists and instrumentalists tickled the ears of the audiences with semi-sacred and then downright secular items of music. And the so-called “Christian Brotherhoods” to whom the pastor gave a talk on “Christian Socialism” or the local member of parliament was invited to air his political views before them. And the multiplication of “bazaars” opened by the “mayoress,” “socials,” “whist drives,” charades and plays to attract and “hold the young people.” Even the pretence of

requiring creditable evidence of regeneration before one was received into church-fellowship was dropped, and the maintenance of Scripture discipline ceased. Such was the awful sowing: now we are reaping the horrible harvest. How could it be otherwise, then, that the Holy Spirit should be grieved and quenched by such a travesty—conducted in the name of Christ!

To-day all who have eyes to see cannot fail to perceive that “Ichabod” has once more been written over a degenerate Christendom, though only those with honest hearts will acknowledge it. The glory of God—the token and evidence of His presence—has “departed.” The Spirit of God has withdrawn His unction and blessing, and their House is left unto them “desolate.” The temple remained standing in Jerusalem for forty years *after* Christ pronounced the awful sentence of Matthew 23:28 before Titus destroyed it in AD 70: the priesthood continued to function and its services were perpetuated, but God no longer owned it. Thus it is with Christendom: the body still exists, but it is lifeless; the “form of godliness” has not yet entirely disappeared, but its power has. Even the smaller groups who came out from the apostate mass, though some of them have preserved “the landmarks of the fathers,” yet they are so pharisaical that the Spirit of God is quenched there too. Pride is as hateful to God as worldliness and false doctrine, and those who boast “the temple of the Lord are these” (Jer 7:4), “the Testimony of God is with *us*,” “all others have departed from the Truth except *our* party”; are too lacking in spiritual discernment to perceive their own sad condition. Lookers-on generally see most!

Except for a few details there is little original in the above, the ground having been frequently gone over. But we have never heard or read anything along the line of what follows, namely, that which happened unto the ark *after* it was captured by the Philistines, and its present bearing upon and application unto our own times. Others have recognized that the Holy Spirit has departed from Christendom—not absolutely and entirely so, but from the corporate body and in withdrawing the manifestations of His presence. Personally we have no doubt that what is recorded in 1 Samuel 5, equally with the preceding chapter, illustrates and adumbrates fundamental principles in the ways of God with that people who are called by His name. Yea, we cannot get away from the conviction that our own generation has witnessed and is witnessing a solemn repetition of what took place in the house of Dagon. The striking incidents narrated in 1 Samuel 5 supply a description of literal historical facts, yet which, we believe, possess an allegorical signification. As to how little or how far we have succeeded in interpreting the same in this and the following article (D.V.) we leave to the judgment of our readers.

“And the Philistines took the ark of God and brought it from Eben-ezer unto Ashdod. When the Philistines took the ark of God they brought it into the house of Dagon and set it before Dagon” (1 Sam 5:1,2). Elated over such a capture, they placed it in their temple in honour of Dagon, the god whom they worshipped (Judg 16:23). But “the triumphing of the wicked is short and the joy of the hypocrite for a moment” (Job 20:5). And so it proved here, for the next thing we are told is, “And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen on his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord. And they took Dagon and set him in his place again. And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold, only the stump of Dagon was left to him” (vv 4,5).

What would constitute the modern form or equivalent of “Dagon”? In seeking the answer to that question

we must be governed by the information which Scripture supplies about him, or it, and all the accompanying details. First, let us consider more definitely what the ark stands for in this connection, and because it possesses a manifold significance we must follow a process of elimination. Let it be duly noted at this point that never once in 1 Samuel 5 or 6 is “the glory of the Lord” mentioned: it is utterly unthinkable that the Shekinah, emblem of the Holy Spirit, should enter a heathen shrine. The ark was the basis of the mercy-seat, the throne of God in Israel's midst, and a blessed type of the person and work of Christ; but in none of these respects do we think it should here be contemplated. Rather it is as “the ark of *testimony*” (Exo 25:16) we regard it. It was repeatedly designated thus because of the “testimony” (Exo 25:16,21) deposited therein, namely, the two tables of stone on which were inscribed the ten commandments (1 Kings 8:4).

Thus, in this Christian era we regard *the Truth of God* as the antitype of the “ark of testimony.” And the sacred ark had fallen into the hands of the uncircumcised! Does it strike the ears of our readers as an incongruous statement to speak of God's holy and eternal Truth being delivered unto His enemies? Surely it should not, when the Lord Himself makes use of the expression “Truth is fallen in the street” (Isa 59:14). Perhaps it may not appear so strange and startling if we next consider *who* it was that had captured the ark. It was neither the Ammonites, the Moabites, or the Midianites; but the *Philistines*. And who were they? Their origin and genealogy is given in Genesis 10. They were the descendants of Ham (v 6), and Ham is, as his name denotes, the “black one” or sun-burnt. He is a symbol and picture of the man who has turned away from God—the Light. He portrays those who have received the Light, but hated and rejected it. But though the Truth enlightens them not, yet it must have some effect, namely to darken them; and the more light received and refused, the darker they become.

Ham begat “Mizraim” (Gen 10:6), who gave his name to the country of Egypt—the house of bondage to God's people (cf. Isa 31:1). Mizraim begat “Casluhim” (Gen 10:14), which signifies “folly”—that which issues from turning away from Wisdom: see Romans 1:22, 23, where we have described the descent of the religious man of the earth, getting further and further away from God. From Casluhim came the Philistines, which means the “migrators” or “wanderers,” so named because they left Egypt and settled in Canaan, “Palestine” deriving its name from them—they dwelt in its southwest part, on the sea coast. The Philistine is never seen outside the land of Canaan. Although he was no true “pilgrim” or “sojourner” as were Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Heb 11:9,13), yet he claimed a home in the domain of faith. Thus we must not look for his modern counterpart in heathendom as such, nor in the openly-defiant and profane world, but rather inside Christendom itself: they are children of the flesh, yet with pretensions to the blessings of faith.

Everything recorded of the Philistines in Scripture helps to identify their successors. In Genesis 26:14,15 we find them making trouble for Isaac and his herdmen, by stopping up the wells which his father had dug—figure of depriving God's people of the Water of Life. One of their women infatuated Samson the Nazarite, figure of one consecrated to God, and brought about his ruin (Judg 14). In that same chapter we find him propounding a riddle to thirty of her companions, but after pondering it for seven days they were unable to declare its meaning—no Philistine is let into the secret of how (contrary to nature) a devourer can yield meat: they know nothing of how God comes in and makes everything serve His purpose, bringing blessing to His people out of their strongest foe. Their guile, treachery and cruelty are seen in the

treatment which they meted out to Samson. Their haughty demeanour and contempt of those who dare to oppose them appeared in Goliath's attitude and language unto David. The final reference made to them in Holy Writ is found in Jehovah's solemn announcement "I will cut off the pride of the Philistines" (Zech 9:6).

The Pharisees were the Philistines of our Lord's day. Firmly entrenched in Immanuel's land they hotly contested every attempt made to eject them. Plainly stamped upon them were the features of Ham. Though they held the lead in the religious realm, yet were they in gross darkness. For when the Light of the world appeared in their midst, the "true," bright Light shining before their eyes, they asked Him for a "sign" (Matt 12:38). What proof was that of their blindness, for it was like asking for a candle at noonday! They were the ones figured by the "elder son" in Luke 15:28, etc.,—the real "Wanderer," never at home with God. And wherever phariseeism has been found during the last nineteen centuries there was the moral embodiment of the Philistine: chiefly, of course, in Romanism, but that abominable mother has many children. Many theological professors and doctors of divinity, prating of their superior scholarship and riding roughly over any who opposed them, bore the stamp of the Philistine. (Part of the above we have culled from a work, now out of print, by F. C. Jennings on Judges.)

The limited space here at our disposal precludes us from now taking up other collateral considerations, so in the closing of this article let us bring together the two points already considered and notice a striking omission. In view of the great importance of the ark one had naturally supposed that the loss of it would have made the deepest possible impression on Israel, that they had made the most desperate efforts to recover it from the Philistines; or that they had unitedly humbled themselves before the Lord and with fastings and prayers besought Him to intervene and remove the grievous dishonour cast upon His name. But apart from the grief of Eli and his daughter-in-law, there is no hint of any perturbation in the Nation. They appear to have been stolidly indifferent. And has not the same grievous lack of zeal and concern for God's glory characterized Christendom? When British and American professors echoed the infidelity of the German neologians, when almost every cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith was denied by the very men who had taken solemn ordination vows to defend it, was not their wicked perversion of the Divine Testimony met, generally, with callous apathy! How none of the churches followed Spurgeon's example when he withdrew from the corrupt system. And though here and there an individual protested and walked out, the majority complacently tolerated or approved. AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### THE WORD OF HIS GRACE.

Various reasons may be suggested why the Scriptures should be so designated: Acts 20:32. Among them the following. First, it is most in accord with His gracious character that their Author should communicate with His people. In view of all that we know of His perfections it is inconceivable that God should hold Himself aloof in unbroken silence: a dumb Deity would be no more winsome than the inarticulate idols of the heathen. If a human parent writes to his sons and daughters when they are absent from home, shall our heavenly Father withhold a like proof of His love for His dear children? We are told that “*it became Him* [the Father], for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10): that is to say, it accorded with His perfections and redounded to His glory that the whole plan of redemption should be as He designed it. Then may it not be said, reverently, it *became* the Triune God to give us a written revelation, that since He is in Himself “the God of all grace” (1 Peter 5:10) He should bestow upon us the Word of His grace? To make such a communication graces or adorns His character. The Psalmist declares of God “Thou hast magnified Thy Word above all Thy name” (138:2), that is, above every other revelation of himself.

Second, yet the gift of His Word is an act of pure benignity on His part. There was nothing whatever outside of God which *required* Him to grant His creatures a written revelation. No indeed: the great I AM finds within Himself the springs of all His actions. He takes counsel with none (Rom 11:34) and gives not account of any of His matters (Job 33:13). God is exalted high above all, fulfilling His own sovereign pleasure, working all things after the counsel of His own will. He is the one absolutely Free Agent in the

universe: under no restraint. All creatures are under infinite obligations unto Him, but He is obligated to none. If then He vouchsafes us a communication it proceeds from His mere condescension and magnanimity: it is an act of pure grace. It must be so, for we were not entitled to it, and could do nothing to earn or merit it; no, not in our unfallen state. The holy angels are dependent creatures, maintained in being and sustained in holiness by their Maker, and therefore it is impossible for them to do anything which brings the Most High into their debt. His Word, then, has issued not from the requirements of justice but proceeds freely from His sovereign grace.

Third, hence the gift of His Word is one of unmerited and undeserved goodwill on God's part. If unfallen creatures are entirely incapable of bringing the Most High under any obligation to them, how much less so those who have revolted from His scepter and repudiated His government over them. What claim can rebels have upon Him whose laws they defiantly trample underfoot? To what favourable consideration are insurrectionists entitled from their Sovereign? None whatever. Their very enmity calls for His wrath and not His mercy, for sentence of judgment rather than expressions of lovingkindness. Then let amazement be rekindled in our hearts as we contemplate afresh this marvel of the Divine clemency. Be astonished O ye heavens and earth, that instead of annihilating the apostate race of Adam Jehovah was pleased to address them in overtures of grace, calling upon them to throw down the weapons of their warfare and be reconciled to Him, making known to them the way of recovery and restoration to His favour. That was indeed grace—grace “fathomless as the sea.”

Fourth, it is so denominated because it is the chief instrument employed by His Spirit. In Hebrews 10:29 we find the Holy Spirit is called “the Spirit of grace,” and He is so designated there in connection with His ministration and operation in the assemblies of the saints. The Word and the Spirit are so intimately conjoined that we are scarcely warranted in thinking of the one without the other. The Word does not operate without the Spirit's agency and the Spirit works not apart from the Word. It was by the Spirit's inspiration that the Word was first given, for “holy men of God spake moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). It is by the Spirit we are enlightened (Eph 1:17,18), yet the Word is the means He employs. It is by the Spirit we are sanctified (Rom 15:16), yet not apart from the Truth (John 17:17). It is by the Spirit we are strengthened (Eph 3:16) as He causes the Word to dwell in us richly (Col 3:16). It is by the Spirit we are comforted (Acts 9:31) as He applies the Divine promises to our hearts. How appropriate, then, that the grand Instrument employed by the Spirit of grace should be termed “the Word of His grace.”

Fifth, in His Word God has disclosed to us the wondrous “riches of His grace.” Therein is set forth the incarnate Word “full of grace and truth” (John 1:14), the One who “came to seek and to save that which was lost,” the “Friend of publicans and sinners” (Luke 7:34), the One who fed the hungry, healed the sick, cleansed the leper, raised the dead. Therein is revealed the “Gospel of the grace of God” bringing “good tidings of great joy,” for it proclaims rest for the weary, pardon to the guilty, justification to the ungodly, adoption to the outcast, treasures in heaven for spiritual paupers. Its terms are “Ho! every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price” (Isa 55:1). Such good news is not to be confined to the cloister but freely proclaimed to “every creature.” The twentieth century needs it as urgently as did the first, and its music is just as welcome to ears opened by the Spirit of grace. It is “the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind” who are to be called to the feast which grace has spread (Luke 14:13).

Sixth, it is called the Word of his grace because therein we are informed how grace is to be obtained, namely, by coming as empty-handed beggars to the Mercy-seat. The dais upon which the Mediator is now seated is the Throne of Grace and Therefore are His subjects invited, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). It is written “But He giveth more grace,” and if we find ourselves straitened the fault is entirely ours and not because of any reluctance in Him to bestow. Nor is the particular fault or cause of our lack difficult to determine: “God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble” (James 4:6). “He hath filled the hungry with good things and the rich He hath sent empty away” (Luke 1:53). It is the poor in spirit, those who feel themselves to be utterly dependent upon the Divine bounty, and not the self-righteous and self-satisfied, who are enriched by the heavenly Donor.

Seventh, because it is itself the chief means of grace. It not only instructs us where grace is to be found and how further supplies of it are to be obtained, but it is the principal medium through which grace is actually imparted to the soul. As its sacred pages are reverently perused the mind is instructed, the conscience enlightened, the affections warmed, and the will moved. As its exceeding great and precious promises are meditated upon and treasured up in the heart new strength is imparted to the soul. As its holy precepts are turned into earnest prayer help is obtained for the discharge of duty. As its timely warnings and admonitions are heeded, temptations lose their power and the snares of Satan are avoided. As its cheering revelation of what God has prepared for them that love Him is received by faith, new hope is kindled in the breast and the trials of life are borne with greater fortitude. As the end of the journey is neared death loses its terrors and the call to remove hence becomes more desirable. AWP

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1943

### **DAGON DESTROYED.**

We closed our last article by calling attention to a striking omission: that in the closing verse of 1 Samuel 4 and the opening ones of 5 there is no hint that the Nation was filled with consternation at their loss of the sacred ark or that they made any attempt to recover it, or that they cried unto the Lord to intervene. Instead, they seemed to have been quite unmoved by such an unprecedented calamity, and taking the line of least resistance remained inert. Yet if we take into consideration all the attendant circumstances we should not be surprised. Consider the *time* when it occurred. It was at some point within the period covered by the book of Judges, and in that book we are told four times “In those days there was no king in Israel,” and twice it is added “every man did that which was right in his own eyes,” which is ever the case when there is no strong central authority. But more: the *priesthood* had failed, yea, was abominably corrupt (1 Sam 2:12-17,22), and thus Israel was without competent leaders either spiritual or civil. What then could be expected of the rank and file of the people!

“When the Philistines took the ark of God they brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon” (1 Sam 5:2). In their most recent form we regard the Philistines as the “Modernists,” the “Rationalists,” the “Higher Critics,” who captured the majority of the seminaries and theological institutions; dominated religious literature, gained possession of almost all the most influential pulpits, and thereby secured control of the public Testimony of God, corrupting the ministerial springs at their source. And what are we to understand by “Dagon” in this connection? It was the “god” of the Philistines, the idol to which they paid homage (Judg 16:23). That idol was a monstrosity, being fashioned after a fish in its lower half but

after the human form in its upper (1 Sam 5:4, margin): thus it portrayed the worship of man plus something inferior in the scale of being. Unto such “strong delusion” were they given up as to worship a non-entity, a figment of their own imagination, something resembling the fabled “mermaid.”

And was not “Evolution”—the theory that man has come from the animals and they from fishes—the grand idol of all the apostate professors and teachers! And what grew out of it? A logical corollary of the Evolutionary theory was the flesh-pleasing idea of *the progress of man* and his wonderful achievements. These were crystallized in the imposing expression “Civilisation,” or “our Christian civilisation,” or more recently “our twentieth-century civilisation.” Pulpit and press, politicians and educational authorities have united in lauding “the steady march of progress,” the tremendous “advance” which has been made, and the utopia which would soon be established in the world. God allowed almost a century to pass for the full development of the modern “Dagon,” that the pride and folly of its deluded devotees might the more plainly appear, for it was in 1848 Charles Darwin's “Origin of Species” appeared—popularised for the masses by Henry Drummonds “*The Ascent of Man.*” Yet side by side with the trumpeting forth of progress and advancement there has been an ever increasing and more widely spread spiritual deterioration and moral degeneracy.

If our memory serves us correctly it was in the 1908 issues of “Things to Come,” a monthly edited by E. W. Bullinger, there appeared some striking articles from the pen of P. Mauro, entitled “The state of the crops,” being a topical excursus on the words “The harvest of the earth is ripe” (Rev 14:15). In them he pointed out how results showed that the natural efforts and attainments of man had already reached their limits, that whether in literary productions, musical compositions, painting or forms of architecture nothing was now being achieved which excelled the fruits of previous generations, that the best being brought forth in these fields of human industry were but replicas or inferior imitations of what our fathers and forefathers possessed. But if the summit of attainment had already been reached by 1908, how far has the world traveled down the incline on the farther side since then!

Some one has said, “The popular taste is a good index to the health of society.” Apply that dictum to our own times and it will quickly appear how the mental and moral health of society has declined. The vast majority now prefer such minor poets as Yeates and Bottomley to the superior excellency of Wordsworth and Tennyson; the crude and hideous sculptures of Robin and Epstein to those of the ancient Greeks; the grotesque and crazy productions of the “cubist” and “surrealist” schools to the masterpieces of Raphael and Turner; the jazz of the jungle and the crooning of Harlem to the strains of Beethoven; the ethical standards of Shaw to Shakespeare's; the modern “thriller” to the more wholesome fiction of Thackeray and Scott. No matter in which direction we turn it is the ugly and the vulgar which is preferred to the beautiful and refined. What a commentary on our so-called “progress.”

This “progress” which has been so much advertised and acclaimed has been merely a mechanical one and not a spiritual and moral. The past century has indeed witnessed some remarkable inventions, but how far have they contributed to the real good of mankind? Electricity and incandescent gas has replaced the candles and oil-lamps of our forebears, but has there been a corresponding increase of spiritual illumination among the people? Steam and petrol power have largely superceded carriages and drays drawn by horses but have they issued in any moral elevation? The present generation has taken to flying in

the air, but there is no evidence of increased heavenly mindedness. On the lowest ground, these inventions have failed to produce more contentment and mental serenity. And do not the losses entailed by these modern devices far outweigh any gains? Witness the appalling “toll of the road”: in America and Britain tens of thousands killed and hundreds of thousands maimed every year! Witness the towns and cities of Europe blasted into ruins from the air! Would it not be a mercy if the clock of “progress” could be pushed back a hundred years?

It matters not which aspect we consider of modern “Progress” for its thin veneer of delusion is easily seen though if the examination be made coolly and critically. For example, how proud the boastings of a generation or so ago about our “Prison Reforms” and our more enlightened treatment of crime when in reality a maudlin sentimentality was allowed to oust a sense of justice. The eugenicist contemplates morals principally from a utilitarian viewpoint. The modern scientist virtually denies the responsibility of the criminal, contending that he is the helpless victim of heredity and environment. “Social workers” affirm that society and not the criminal is to blame. In consequence the retributive element in punishment has been more and more displaced by the reformatory. Short sentences became increasingly popular and prisoners increasingly petted. A premium was practically placed upon crime by making the lot of the culprit pleasanter, certainly more secure, than that of the average workman. It makes no difference to these theorists that the virtuous (though outnumbered) are to be met with in the slums, while some of the most vicious spring from good parents and excellent homes.

Instead of asking the question, what harvest could be expected from such a sowing? we would push our inquiry further back and ask, Was this highly praised movement actuated by nobler or inferior principles to those which have regulated our fathers? It is a simple matter for the objector to reply, this generation is more tempered by mercy than were previous ones. It is equally simple for us to deny it. But let us ask, Is the criminal the only one entitled to mercy? what of *his victims*—the thousands of comparatively poor people robbed by swindlers and tricksters. Is it lack of mercy which seeks to throw a wall of protection around the weak and gullible, by imposing such penalties as are likely to deter those who would prey upon them? Then prisons ought not to be made so attractive that they cease to be a deterrent to crime. Is it unmerciful to pass the death-sentence on a slayer if an hundred potential murderers are curbed by such an example? Let justice be tempered by mercy, but not a mercy which closes its eyes to the essential difference between right and wrong.

Suffer us to allude unto one other aspect of our twentieth-century progress, namely, the enormous efforts which have been made by the state to raise the “standard of life” for the labouring classes. Fabulous sums have been spent during the last twenty years in “doles,” “pensions,” and “family allowances.” Even the unprecedented cost of the present war was not allowed to curtail the colossal upkeep of the “social services.” And *has* the “standard of life” been raised at all? The answer to that question depends upon your standard of measurement. Better fed and better housed working-men certainly have not produced better workmanship! As the majority of impartial and competent observers foresaw, the “dole” has been most demoralizing, destroying in many the incentive to earn their bread honestly by the sweat of the brow. Nor has it produced more contentment: the more they be given, the more they expect—demand. What proportion of the huge sums spent in doles and allowances found its way into the pockets of publicans, brewers, distillers, dog-racing proprietors, and amusement caterers.

To return unto 1 Samuel 5. The sacred ark had been captured by the Philistines and Israel tamely submitted to their loss. It looked as though the Lord Himself was indifferent, for He put no obstacle in the way of His enemies and even permitted them to conclude that Dagon was greater than Himself. That is why, after recounting the calamities recorded in 1 Samuel 4—see 78:60-65—the Psalmist uses those striking figures of speech: “Then the Lord awaked as one out of sleep, like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine” (78:65). Jehovah now took into His own hands the work of avenging His outraged honour and vindicating His great name. God is a jealous God: He had shown Himself such by severely chastising His friends, because they had long tolerated unjudged evils in their midst. And now the fierceness of His jealousy should be felt by His foes. He made bare His right arm and smote His insulting adversaries, and He continued to smite until they were compelled to recognize *Who* it was that was dealing with them.

“And when they of Ashdod arose early on the morrow, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the ark of the Lord” (1 Sam 5:3). Once more we express our conviction that the history of Dagon contains an allegorical significance, that it portrays what has occurred again and again in the lives of different nations and empires, yea that it gives us a pattern of what has been and is taking place in the world before our own eyes. It is a revelation of the unchanging principles in the governmental dealings of God, and therefore is fraught with important spiritual instruction. The “Dagon” worshipped by our moderns is the so-called “Christian Civilisation.” And what happened *to it*, my reader, during 1914-1918? when the most “cultured” and “highly civilised” of the nations engaged each other in a contest of such gigantic dimensions and ruthless ferocity, employed such diabolical means and methods and sacrificed the flower of their manhood to such an appalling extent, that the whole range of human history supplies no parallel. Man has prated of his ascent from the animal, and it was left to the disciples of such a philosophy to demonstrate how beastly they still were. Proud “civilisation” was shaken to its foundations, humiliated into the dust, flung on its very face in 1914-1918.

And what was the Philistines' response to their humiliating experience? Did they acknowledge the Hand that had overturned their idol? Did they own their insensate folly and confess they were vainly fighting against Heaven? No, they did not, for the next thing we read of is that “they took Dagon and set him in his place again” (v 3). They were still determined that Dagon should be their “god.” See the blinding and besotting power of self-will. How true it is that “they that make them [the senseless idols] are like unto them” (Psa 115:8)! And what effect did the frightful tragedy of 1914-1918 have upon the nations of Christendom? Was there a general turning unto God and an humbling of themselves before Him? No, in the language of Isaiah 26:10, 11 it had to be said “They *will not* behold the majesty of the Lord. Lord, when Thy hand is lifted up, they *will not see*.” Neither the goodness of God nor the severity of God made any impression: they continued to harden their hearts and followed out their mad dreamings.

May we not see in the institution of the League of Nations with the wonderful benefits it was going to confer upon mankind in the restablising and securing of “Civilisation” the setting up again of “Dagon”? Was not the widely preached “Universal Brotherhood of Man” now to receive practical expression by the nations of the earth banded together as they never had been before. Might was now to give place to right, force to reason. In future, disputes should be justly but amicably settled by arbitration and war would be rendered impossible. The world would now be “made safe for democracy.” Civilisation would at last stand upon a firm basis and the steady march of progress which had been so rudely interrupted, could be

resumed with an ever-brightening prospect. Such in brief were the promises made and the hopes inspired by that wonderful production of twentieth-century politicians and diplomats. And what a will 'o the wisp it proved!

The “march of progress” from 1920 onwards, was, if measured by the standards of righteousness and decency, steadily downwards and not upwards. During the fifteen years that followed, “Civilised Britain” became more and more a “Continentalised Britain,” a “Paganised Britain.” That which our fathers had so carefully erected their children took pleasure in tearing down. Everything which had ennobled the “Victorian” era was sneered at and jettisoned. Those with the least sense of decency were determined to drag down into the gutter the whole of the rising generation. An orgy of licentiousness was widely entered into. Night-clubs were multiplied, dog-racing tracks opened all over the country, gambling spread like wild fire among the young people and cocktail parties abounded on every side. The beaches lowered their bathing restrictions and modesty became a thing of the past. Youth was allowed to have its fling unrestrained. The sanctity of the Sabbath totally disappeared, the Lord's day being devoted to pleasuring and carousing.

Mayfair became another Harlem and other places emulated their very example or attempted to “go one worse.” The novels and magazines of the last decade have been filled with obscenities and blasphemies. A friend of ours engaged in the publishing business years ago recently wrote us, “To-day we have shops stacked with books which, had they been published when we were boys the authors and publishers would have been put in jail.” Censorship has long since been reduced to a farce. The great majority of the children never entered either a “Sunday school” or “church” in the years between 1920-38 and their ideas were formed by the pictures they saw at the “movies” and the debasing productions of a degenerate press. As a recent writer said “the Evangelical Christian,” “The best sellers of to-day are more often than not books whose morals are of the barnyard, whose language is of the sewer and whose ethics are of the pit. The ghastly thing is that you will find such novels prominently displayed and often commended by large Church publishing houses.”

And what was the sequel to the Philistines setting up again of their idol? This, “And when they arose early on the morrow morning, behold, Dagon was fallen upon his face to the ground before the ark of the Lord; and the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off upon the threshold; only the fishy part was left to him” (v 12). Thus did Jehovah again stain their pride and write folly across that which they were so determined to honour. This time Dagon was not only overturned but dashed to pieces, losing its head and hands—the members which speak of wisdom and power—so that nothing but the stump remained. In its present application the realization of this is not to be looked for in any particular act or event, but in a process of decay and demolition. As the recent withdrawal of the Spirit in Christendom was gradual, covering an interval of several years; as the overturning of Dagon was most noticeable during 1914-1918; so the final destruction of Dagon, though the pace of deterioration has greatly increased, may be extended over a longer or shorter period.

There is no doubt in this writer's mind that the present generation is even now witnessing and will continue to witness the smashing up of the much-vaunted modern Dagon. It was surely significant that the three men occupying the most prominent and influential positions in modern life, namely, Mr. N. Chamberlain,

the prime-minister of Great Britain, Mr. F. Roosevelt, the president of the USA, and the pope from the Vatican all placed themselves on record in public statements in 1938, that if the threatened war of Europe eventuated it would mean and entail “The end of Civilisation as we know it.” No doubt they alluded more especially to the material and financial structure, for most of the ethical and spiritual elements, the best features of our corporate life, that which made for refinement and elevation of the mind, had well-nigh disappeared from the world when those men made their pronouncements. How dreadfully everything has gone from bad to worse since then may be gathered from the newspapers, though in their present abbreviated form only a small part of the tragedy is being chronicled.

The breakdown and breakup of “Civilisation” appears in such things as the decay of the sanctity of marriage—as evidenced by the multiplication of divorces, the abandonment of such numbers of babies, the fearful increase of bigamy; juvenile delinquency and of immorality and disease among the young, the vandalism which is now so rife, such widespread pilfering, the appalling amount of absenteeism in all sections of labour, and the supine efforts of the authorities to deal with such evils. English law carries a penalty of seven years for the crime of bigamy, yet guilty ones rarely receive more than three months. Thousands of culprits who ought to be sent to prison are given nominal fines. Recently an ARP chief in a big London borough, when deploring the wanton injury inflicted on the “shelters,” complained that “We have had fines as low as 1/- (25 cents) against young hooligans caught damaging shelter equipment.” Law and order is almost reduced to a farce. The chief officer for the LMS railway stated, “In the past year 8,600 carriage windows had been broken; 19,300 door-straps removed, 40,000 electric lamps removed.” The head of Dagon is already broken off!

It is said “the war is responsible for these evils.” Not so: war conditions have merely brought things to a head and caused the scum to rise to the surface. “He that is an hireling...seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth...The hireling fleeth because he *is* a hireling” (John 10:12,13) reveals the principle. We do what we do because we are what we are. There is ever a rigid consistency between character and conduct. When the testing time comes each one reveals what he is by what he does. Character is most revealed by our conduct in the crises of life. When did the “hireling” flee? When he saw the wolf approaching: that was not what made him an hireling, but *discovered him* as such—one with no love for the sheep. Present conditions have caused the masses to drop all pretence and come out in their true colours. The thin coating of “civilised” varnish has worn off and twentieth-century character stands exposed.

But even when Dagon was destroyed something yet more drastic was required to bring the Philistines to their senses. “The hand of the Lord was heavy upon them of Ashdod and He destroyed them, and smote them with emerods” (v 6). They removed the ark to Gath, and “a very great destruction” smote the men there also (v 9). They sent it to Ekron and its inhabitants were so terrified they demanded that the ark be retruned to Israel (v 11). Thus did God avenge Himself and make the wrath of man to praise Him. Never did a boastful people undergo so deep a dishonour in the eyes of their neighbours, to whom they became a laughing stock; and never did an idol suffer a worse disgrace than that which befell Dagon. Afterwards the ark was restored again to Israel, and if history continues, in God's appointed time, after His judgments have accomplished their designed work, the Spirit will return to a purged Christendom and the Testimony of God be established again in its midst. AWP

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1943

### THE WORD OF TRUTH.

One of the many titles given to the Holy Scriptures is “the Word of Truth” (2 Tim 2:15). They are such because a communication from “the God of Truth” (Isa 65:17), a revelation from Him “that cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). O the privilege of possessing such a boon! Do we definitely and thankfully realize when we take up the Bible to read that it is nothing less than a message from Heaven, reliably translated into our mother tongue? What a priceless treasure! “The Word of Truth”: no errors or fables in it, nothing to mislead or deceive; but inerrant and absolutely trustworthy. How grateful is this writer that from the cradle he was trained to receive the Sacred Scriptures as the Word of Truth, and that his parents in their turn had received the same pious teaching in their infancy. True, that training had been lost upon him unless God had been pleased to sanctify the same and in His appointed time to grant him a personal and saving knowledge of the Truth. Yet it is His way to honour those who honour Him (1 Sam 2:30), though He reserves to Himself the sovereign right to do so in whatever *manner* pleases Him.

The Word of Truth: what a peerless and priceless treasure is this! Not a production of the Church nor even the composition of the holy angels, but the Word of *God Himself*. It is a “light that shineth in a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). It is a life-giving Stream for parched pilgrims as they journey through this “wilderness of sin.” It is the Word of Truth in pointed contrast from all “science falsely so-called” (1 Tim 6:20) and “philosophy and vain deceit” (Col 2:8). Living as we are in a world of shams and make-beliefs, of exaggeration and prevarication, of fiction and falsity, how inestimably valuable is this “Thus saith the Lord”! Well may we say of the Scriptures “More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine

gold” (Psa 19:10). In the midst of so much conflicting opinion, speculation and uncertainty, where should we be if the Word of Truth had not been vouchsafed to us? We should be mariners upon the sea of life without chart or compass. We should be ignorant alike of our origin, our duty, and our destiny.

What a blessing it is when all doubt as to their Divine Authorship is removed and we are favoured with a definite assurance that the Holy Scriptures *are* “the Word of Truth”! One of the chief elements in “the faith of God's elect” (Titus 1:1) is a deep conviction, an unshakable confidence, that the Bible is a Divine revelation. Neither the arguments of men nor the assaults of Satan can move its possessor from what has been rightly termed this “impregnable rock.” The Christian *knows* it is the Word of God for it has spoken to his heart in a way nothing else has or can. It would make no difference to him if every one else on earth was a sceptic or infidel, for his faith stands not in the wisdom of men but in the power of God, and neither human sophistry nor Satanic malice can destroy it. How could they, when God has given him to “know *the certainty* of the words of Truth” (Prov 22:21). Hence it is that he can exclaim with one of old “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16).

What an unspeakable mercy it is when we are given a *love* of the Truth! By nature both writer and reader are liars. “The wicked are estranged from the womb, they go astray as soon as they be born, speaking lies” (Psa 58:3). No child has to be taught to lie—it comes naturally to him; nor does he have to be corrupted by contact with others—he is born corrupt at the core of his being. This is the just entail of the Fall. Our first parents preferred the Devil's lie to God's Truth, and all of their descendants inherit the poisonous virus which then entered into them. In consequence “the whole world lieth in the wicked one” (1 John 5:19) and he is “a liar and the father of it” (John 8:44). Thus by nature we have no love for the Truth, but instead a strong antipathy and resistance against it. The unregenerate do not want to know the truth about themselves: no, they wish to be flattered and encouraged to entertain a good opinion of themselves. Hence, the Lord Jesus declared “Because I tell you the Truth, ye believe not” (John 8:45)—had He told them lies they had welcomed Him.

Since the whole world lieth in the wicked one and he is the arch-liar, we should not be surprised at the world being so full of pretence and hum-buggery and that the Truth of God is so bitterly hated. A striking illustration of this solemn feature, now spread before us on a lower plane, appears in the outlook of most of our fellows toward the war. The great majority do not want to know the truth but wish to hear fairy tales. The popular speaker or writer is the one who airily announces that victory is just round the corner and who heralds each minor success as proof that the end of the awful conflict is near at hand. Such a statement is likely to be hotly challenged, yet while many say and probably think they want to be told the real facts and know the worst, deep down in their hearts they do not. They pride themselves on being optimists and denounce as pessimists any who differ from them. Since this be the case in connection with temporal things, who is likely to tolerate the truth concerning Eternity! The fact is that “Truth is fallen in the street” (Isa 59:14) and is now being ruthlessly trampled on on every side.

How thankful we should be if we can honestly say “I have *chosen the way of Truth*” (Psa 119:30). The religious realm is a veritable “babel” or confusion of tongues, wherein are innumerable controversies and doubtful disputations, all varnished with specious pretence, until many are at their wit's end and the

“unlearned and unstable” are in despair. But not so the one who is resolved to be directed by the Word of God and who brings all he hears and reads to the touchstone of the Truth, proving all things and holding fast that which is good (1 Thess 5:21). One reason why God permits so much disputing and doctrinal differences is that His own people may be stirred up to the more diligent search for Truth itself. Even though I have chosen the way of Truth I shall still need to pray, “Remove from me the way of lying” (Psa 119:29), to which the flesh is ever prone. “Lead me in Thy Truth” (Psa 25:5), must be my daily cry.

Best of all is it when we are found “*walking in the Truth*” (2 John 4), for it is then God is most glorified. His Word is given to us for this very purpose: to be a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path—to direct our conduct and regulate our deportment. In proportion as our daily life is ordered by the Word do we evince the sincerity and reality of our profession. The extent to which we actually walk in the Truth will determine the measure of our enjoyment of God's approbation: “If a man love me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come unto him and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23). “His Truth shall be thy shield and buckler” (Psa 91:4): our defence and protection—panoplied in “the whole armour of God” the Christian is safe in the day of battle. By walking in the Truth we find rest unto our souls (Jer 6:16). AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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October, 1943

### **REWARDS.**

To the infidel much in the Scriptures seems so inconsistent and inharmonious that he charges them with “abounding in contradictions.” That there should be no variableness or shadow of turning with God, yet that He is frequently said to “repent”; that He claims to be omnipotent and invincible, yet complains “ye have set at nought all My counsel” (Prov 1:25); that He is love, yet abhors the wicked (Psa 5:6); that He is of tender mercy, yet has appointed an eternity of torment for all those whose names are not written in the book of life—to mention no others—appear to the sceptic as irreconcilable teachings. To the natural man the Christian life appears to be a mass of bewildering paradoxes. That the poor in spirit and those who mourn should be pronounced happy, that we have to be made fools in order to become wise, that it is when we are weak we are strong, that we must lose our life in order to save it (Matt 16:25), and that we are bidden to “rejoice with trembling” (Psa 2:11) transcend his comprehension. Yet none of these things present any insuperable difficulty unto those who are taught of God.

In like manner there is not a little in the teaching of Holy Writ which perplexes the theologian. As he studies and ponders its declarations, one doctrine—for a time, at least—seems to clash with another. If God has predestinated whatsoever cometh to pass, then what room is left for the discharge of human responsibility and free agency? If the Fall has deprived man of all spiritual strength, then how can he be held blameworthy for failing to perform spiritual duties? If Christ died for the elect only, then how can He be offered freely to “every creature”? If the believer be Christ's “freeman,” then why is he required to take upon him His “yoke”? If he has been set at “liberty” (Gal 5:1) then how can he be “under the Law” (1 Cor

9:21). If the believer be preserved by God, then how can his own perseverance be necessary in order to the attainment of everlasting bliss? if he be secure, how can he be in danger? If he has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, why does he so often have occasion to cry "O wretched man that I am"? If sin does not have dominion over him, why do "iniquities prevail against" him (Psa 65:3)? Real problems are these.

We have commenced this article thus because the subject which is here to engage our attention seems to many to clash with other articles of the Faith. In ordinary speech the word "reward" signifies the recognition and requital of a meritorious performance, the bestowment of something to which a person is justly entitled. But what can the creature merit at the hands of the Creator, to what—save disapprobation and punishment—is a sinful creature entitled from a holy God? If salvation be "by grace" and eternal life is a "free gift" then what place is left for the recompensing of human effort? Yet whatever difficulties may be involved, the fact remains that Scripture has not a little to say about God's rewarding the obedient and crowning the overcomer. The Dispensationalists (among them most of the so-called "Fundamentalists") have realized there is a knot here, but instead of patiently seeking to untie they have summarily cut it, by asserting that rewards have a place only under the Legal Dispensation and are entirely excluded from the Age of Grace; yet the very Epistles which, as they allow, belong to the present Era, contain many passages postulating "rewards." Verily, "the legs of the lame are not equal" (Prov 26:7).

Our present subject is by no means a simple one, and certainly it is not suited for a novice to take up and descant upon. Not that the teaching of Scripture thereon is at all obscure or hard to be understood, but rather that much wisdom is needed in the *handling of it*, so as to avoid conveying false impressions, weakening the force of other articles of the Faith, and failing to preserve the balance of the Truth. Very little attention was given to the subject of Divine rewards either by the Reformers or the Puritans (less by the latter than the former)—probably they felt that most of their energies needed to be devoted unto counteracting the evil leaven of Romanism, with its strong emphasis upon creature "merits" and salvation by works. Yet in avoiding one error there is always the danger of going to the opposite, and even where that is avoided, it is usually at the price of depriving God's children of some portion of their needed and Divinely-provided Bread. Whatever be the explanation, the fact remains that our present theme is a much-neglected one for comparatively little has been said or written upon it. We are therefore the more cast back upon God for help.

The servant of God must not suffer the fear of man to muzzle him, as he will if he deems it wisest to remain silent on the subject lest he be charged with "leanings towards Romanism": *their* very perversion of this truth renders it all the more necessary and urgent that *he* should give a plain and positive exposition of the same. On the other hand, the fact that Papists have so grievously wrested it should warn him that great care needs to be exercised in the way he presents it. He needs to make it crystal clear that it is utterly impossible to bring God under obligation to us or make Him in any wise our Debtor. In like manner it must be shown that the creature cannot acquire any merit by the most self-sacrificing or benevolent deeds he performs. By so doing he will preclude the laying of any foundation for pharisaic pride. Nevertheless, he must see to it that he does not so whittle away the passages holding up "rewards" to believers, as to render them meaningless and valueless, for they are among the motives, encouragements, incentives, and consolations which God sets before His people.

In a brief and incidental statement upon this doctrine Calvin beautifully preserved the balance when in his “Institutes” (bk. 3, chap. 15) he said: “The Scripture shows *what* all our works are capable of meriting, when it represents them as unable to bear the Divine scrutiny, because they are full of impurity; and in the next place, what would be merited by the perfect observance of the Law, if this could anywhere be found, when it directs us 'when ye have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants' (Luke 17:10), because we shall not have conferred any favour on God, but only have performed the duties incumbent on us, for which no thanks are due. Nevertheless, the good works which the Lord has conferred on us, He denominates our own, and declares that He will not only accept, but also reward them. It is our duty to be animated by so great a promise, and to stir up our minds that we 'be not weary in well doing' (2 Thess 3:13) and to be truly grateful for so great an instance of Divine goodness.

“It is beyond a doubt, that whatever is laudable in our works proceeds from the grace of God, and that we cannot properly ascribe the least portion of it to ourselves. If we truly and seriously acknowledge this truth, not only all confidence, but likewise all idea of merit, immediately vanishes. We, I say, do not, like the sophists, divide the praise of good works between God and man, but we preserve it to the Lord complete, entire, and uncontaminated. All that we attribute to man is, that those works which were otherwise good are tainted and polluted by impurity. For nothing proceeds from the most perfect man which is wholly immaculate. Therefore let the Lord sit in judgment on the best of human actions, and He will indeed recognize in them His own righteousness, but man's disgrace and shame. Good works, therefore, are pleasing to God, and not unprofitable to the authors of them; and they will moreover receive the most ample blessings from God as their reward: not because they merit them, but because the Divine goodness has freely appointed them this reward.” Let us attempt to offer some amplification of these excellent remarks.

First, no creature is rewarded by God because he justly deserves what is bestowed upon him, as a hired labourer who has performed his duty is entitled to the wage he receives. For, in this sense, even the angels in heaven are incapable of a reward: according to strict justice, they merit no favour. They are no hirelings, for God has a natural, original, undisputed right in them, as much as He has in the sun, moon and stars; and these, therefore, deserve to be paid for their shining, as much as the angels do for their service. If the angels love God it is no more than He infinitely deserves. Moreover, the angels do not profit God, and so lay Him under no obligation, any more than the birds profit the risen sun by their morning songs or render that luminary under obligation to shine all day upon them. “Can a man be profitable unto God as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? Is it any pleasure to the Almighty that thou art righteous? or is it gain to Him that thou makest thy ways perfect?” (Job 22:2,3).

It is most essential that this should be insisted upon, more especially in these days, that the Most High may be accorded His due place in our thoughts, His awful majesty, exalted independency and self-sufficiency preserved in their integrity. That the creature may be allotted his proper place: as being not only a creature, but as less than nothing in the sight of Him that gave him being and is pleased to maintain his existence. That the axe may be laid at the very root of self-righteousness. Papists are far from being alone in indulging the flesh-pleasing conceit that even a fallen and sinful creature is capable of performing meritorious deeds, which entitle him to favourable regard by the Lord God. Unless Divine grace has given our pride its death-wound, every one of us secretly cherishes the belief—though we may not be honest

enough to openly avow it—that we deserve a reward for our good works; and hence we are apt to think that God would be very hard and severe, if not cruel and unjust, were He to take no notice of our best endeavours and damn us because of our sins. “Wherefore have we fasted, say they, and Thou seest not?” (Isa 58:3).

But, second, The fact remains that Scripture abounds in declarations that God has promised to reward the fidelity of His people and compensate them for the sufferings they have endured in His service. “The recompense of a man's hands shall be rendered unto him” (Prov 12:14). “Whoso despiseth the Word shall be destroyed, but he that feareth the commandment shall be rewarded” (Prov 13:13). “Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matt 5:11,12). “His Lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many” (Matt 25:23). “When thou makest a feast call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind and thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee, for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just” (Luke 14:13,14). “Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Cor 3:8). “Whatsoever good things any man doeth the same shall he receive of the Lord” (Eph 6:8). Now these, and all similar passages, must be allowed their legitimate force and given a due place in our minds and hearts.

The principal difficulty which this subject presents to the thoughtful Christian is, What have I done which is meet for reward? and even though I had, how could reward consist with free grace? The solution to this problem is found in noting the grounds on which God bestows rewards. First, in order to manifest His own excellencies. It is in His office as moral Governor that He exercises this function, in which office He evidences His holiness, goodness and benevolence, as well as His sovereignty and justice. As the Ruler of all it becomes Him to manifest His approbation of righteousness, to put honour upon virtue, and to display the bountifulness of His nature. Though according to strict justice the angels in Heaven deserve nothing at His hands, yet God is pleased to reward their sinless obedience in testimony of His approbation of their persons and service. God rewards them not because they do Him any good, nor because they are entitled to anything from him, but because He delights in that which is amiable and because He would demonstrate to the universe that He is a Friend of all that are morally excellent, He liberally recompenses them. Since they love Him with all their hearts and strength, He deems it fitting that they should be made eternally blessed in the enjoyment of Himself.

Second, in the case of His people who fell in Adam and who have also themselves sinned and come short of the glory of God, they neither merit anything good at His hands, nor is it fitting that their persons and conduct—considered merely as they are in themselves—should be approved; nay, so much corruption still indwells them and so much impurity is attached to all that proceeds from them, that the Divine Law condemns them. Thus it must be on quite a different ground that God considers them suited to reward. What that is, the Gospel of the grace of God makes known. It is on account of the believer's interest in the righteousness and worthiness of *Christ* that his person and performances are accepted and peculiar favours are shown unto and bestowed upon him. He is “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6), and his consecration (Rom 12:1), his gifts or benevolences (Phil 4:18) and his worship are “acceptable to God by Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 2:5); yea, his prayers ascend up before God only because the “much incense” of Christ's merits is

added to them (Rev 8:3,4).

Third, in showing His approval of the service of His saints God is, at the same time, owning the Spirit's work in them, for it is by His gracious operations and power that they are enabled to perform such service. Thus far all is plain and simple: it is when the good works which God rewards are viewed as the saints' own that many are likely to encounter difficulty. But that difficulty is greatly relieved if it be definitely understood that God's rewarding of our efforts is solely a matter of *bounty* on His part, and not in any wise because we have rendered a *quid pro quo* and have earned the recompense. The reward bestowed upon us is not an acknowledgement that the same was due us by way of debt, but rather is the reward itself given out of pure and free grace. If an earthly parent promises his child the gift of a new Bible when he has correctly memorized the Ten Commandments, that child did not bring his parent under obligation nor did he merit the book: the book is freely given by way of bounty, yet by constituting it a “reward” or “prize” for an effort of memory it became an incentive and inducement to the child to succeed in his task.

Scripture itself makes the distinction between rewards of justice and rewards of bounty, yea it shows how a thing may be, at the same time, *both* a “free gift” and a “reward.” “Now to him that worketh [i.e. earns, so that he has ground to be self-complacent, see v 2] is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt” (Rom 4:4), which certainly signifies there are two very different kinds of reward, or rather, that they are bestowed on radically different grounds. That a thing may be at the same time both a free gift and a reward appears by a comparison of Matthew 5:46 and Luke 6:32. In the former Christ asks, “For if ye love them which love you, what *reward* have you?” but in the latter “For if ye love them that love you, what *thank* have you?”—the Greek word (“charis”) here rendered “thank” signifies “favour,” being translated “grace” more than one hundred times. Clearer still is Colossians 3:22-24: “Servants, obey in all things your masters according to the flesh...fearing God...knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance”—what can be freer or more unearned than an “inheritance”? yet the eternal inheritance is here styled a “reward” as an incentive to obedience unto God.

The same inheritance which is called a reward in Colossians 3:24 is designated “the purchased possession” in Ephesians 1:14—purchased for the saints by Christ. In like manner, in Romans 6:22 we read “Being now made free from sin and become servants of God, ye have your fruit unto holiness and the end [that at which you aim, that which will abundantly compensate your serving of God] everlasting life,” yet in the very next verse that everlasting life is said to be “the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Just as the Saviour exhorted the Jews to “labour—not for the meat which perisheth, but—for that which endureth unto everlasting life,” yet He at once added “which the Son of man shall give unto you” (John 6:27). The same apostle who taught that the saints are “accepted in the Beloved” (Eph 1:6), hesitated not to say “wherefore we labour [or “endeavour”], whether present or absent, we may be accepted of Him” (2 Cor 5:9); and though he insisted that “By grace are ye saved through faith, and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God; not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8,9), he also exhorted his hearers to “labour therefore to enter into” the rest God has promised His people (Heb 4:11).

J. Owen said, “I grant that eternal life may be called the reward of perseverance, in the sense that Scripture uses that word.” After stating it is procured neither as the deserving cause, nor proportioned unto the obedience of them by whom it is attained, but withal the free gift of God and an inheritance purchased by

Jesus Christ, Owen declared it is “a reward by being a gracious encouragement as the end of our obedience.” That the reward is not a proportioned remuneration or return for the duties performed and service rendered is clear from the words of Christ, when He declared that “whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward” (Mark 10:42). So also when Abraham had made enemies of the kings of Canaan by rescuing Lot out of their hands, and then refused to be enriched by the king of Sodom, what proportion was there between his actions and Jehovah's response, when He said to him “Fear not, Abraham, I am thy shield and thy exceeding great Reward” (Gen 15:1). There was a *connection* between the two things, but *no proportion*.

“Be not deceived, God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to the flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption, but he that soweth to the spirit shall of the spirit reap life everlasting” (Gal 6:7,8). The sorrows and joys of the future life bear a similar relation to what is wrought in this as the harvest does to the sowing, one being the consequence, the fruit, or reward of the other. There is a definite relation subsisting between sowing to the spirit and reaping everlasting life, between what is done unto Christ in this life and the joys of the life to come. This relation is just as *real* as that between sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption, despising and defying Christ and the torments of Hell, though it is not in all respects the same. AWP

(D.V. to be continued.)

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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November, 1943

### THE WORD OF FAITH.

“The Word of Faith that we preach” (Rom 10:8). We shall not here attempt an exposition of that interesting passage, but rather deal with this expression topically, suggesting different reasons why the Word of God is so termed. First, because faith is the principal thing *required by* the Word. Being a Divine revelation nothing less than our hearty acceptance of it is its manifest due. Being the Word of Him that cannot lie it is fully entitled to our credence. It is not a mark of wisdom or superior mental acumen, but of spiritual imbecility, to discredit and disdain this celestial communication: “O fools and slow of heart to believe all that the Prophets have spoken” (Luke 24:25). The Scriptures are “worthy of all acceptance.” Faith in its simplest form is receiving “the witness of God” (1 John 5:9). God has spoken, and faith cannot doubt or question what He has said. The soul that reverently and confidently accepts the Divine testimony “hath set to his seal that God is true” (John 3:33), and until he does so, his skepticism makes out God to be a liar (1 John 5:10). Faith, then, is its legitimate demand.

Second, because it is *the foundation* on which faith rests. However black may be my record, however vile I appear in my own eyes or those of my fellows, when faith appropriates that word “Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out” (John 6:37,38) it has firm ground to stand upon. Faith rests upon the promise of the faithful and immutable God. Faith builds upon His sure Word, knowing that He will never alter one thing which has gone forth from His mouth. Said David, “And now, O Lord God, Thou art that God and Thy words be true, and Thou hast promised this goodness unto Thy servant” (2 Sam 7:28): he knew that such an One would neither deceive nor fail him. “Whosoever believeth on Him shall not be confounded”

(Rom 9:33). When God has promised a thing it is infallibly certain of accomplishment, and we may rest thereon in the greatest perplexities and extremities. When faith “lays hold of the hope set before us” it becomes “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast” (Heb 6:18,19).

Third, because it is *the sphere* in which faith operates. Faith has nothing to do with feelings, impulses, or the dictates of carnal reason: the Word of God is the realm in which it lives, moves, and has its being. Faith soars high above the opinions of the world, or “the voice of the Church”: it moves within the circle of Divine revelation. It recognizes no duty except what Holy Writ enjoins. It cherishes no desires save those which the Divine Oracles inspire. It realizes that to act without an express “thus saith the Lord” is to act either presumptuously or in blind credulity. In prayer its language is “Remember the word unto Thy servant upon which Thou hast caused me to hope” (Psa 119:49): concerning which Matthew Henry pertinently said, “Those that make God's promises their portion, may with humble boldness make them their plea.” However opposed its dictates to human wisdom, the language of faith is “nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net” (Luke 5:5). When God speaks that is enough; where He is silent, faith refuses to move.

Fourth, because it is *the means* by which faith is informed. Faith is not self-sufficient, but dependent. It is like a dutiful but ignorant child who desires to please his father, yet knows not how until his will is made known. If we had not the Word of God in our hand faith would be completely at a loss—like a mariner without chart or compass. This is not sufficiently realized. It is true that unless the Word be mixed with faith it profits us not; it is equally true that faith cannot function aright unless informed by the Word. Faith is the eye of the spirit: but something more than sight is needed—light is equally essential, for the keenest vision is useless in a darkened room. Hence the Psalmist declares “The entrance of Thy words giveth light: it giveth understanding unto the simple” (119:130), that is, to the one who receives them with childlike simplicity, which is exactly what faith does. The Scriptures, then, are the Word of Faith because they instruct it. “For the Commandment is a lamp and the Law is light” (Prov 6:23); “the Commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes” (Psa 19:8).

Fifth, because it is *the food* by which faith is nourished. Faith is a creature, or at any rate a part of the new creation, and like every other creature it stands in need of that which will minister to its maintenance. Since God be its Object, His words are what it feeds upon. Said one of the prophets, “Thy words were found, and I did *eat* them, and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart” (Jer 15:16). That was not only the language of faith, but it describes both the means and the process by which faith is nourished. Faith makes a personal *appropriation*, taking unto itself what God has said. Faith proceeds to a *mastication* of what is placed before it. God's Word is made up of words, and on them faith ruminates and meditates. Faith issues in *assimilation*, so that the Word is actually taken up into the soul, and strength and energy is supplied thereby. Thus will faith aver “I have esteemed the words of His mouth more than my necessary food” (Job 23:12). And thus also do we read of being “nourished up in the words of faith” (1 Tim 4:6).

Sixth, because it is *the Rule* by which it is directed. Though this approximates closely to what was considered under our fourth point, yet it is to be distinguished from it. The Word of God is more than informative: it is authoritative, and therefore is it designated “The Faith which was once [for all] delivered

unto the saints” (Jude 3), which they are exhorted to “earnestly contend for.” The Word is the alone Rule which faith has to walk by. But is not the Christian also prompted and guided by the Spirit? Such a question betrays sad confusion of thought and much harm has been wrought among those giving place to it. How often we have heard different ones make the claim that the Spirit moved them to perform such and such an act—for example, a woman to preach to or lead in prayer before a mixed congregation, which is forbidden by 1 Timothy 2:12; 1 Corinthians 14:34. The Spirit quickens and empowers, but He never prompts to anything contrary to Scripture. “He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches” (Rev 1:7) i.e. as it is recorded in the alone Rule of Faith.

Seventh, because faith is *the key* which opens the Scriptures. Yet how little is this realized. The chief hindrance to our lack of perception of spiritual things is neither mental dullness nor lack of what the world terms “education.” Proof of that is seen in the fact that men endowed with the keenest of intellect and equipped by the highest standards of “modern scholarship” find the Word of God a sealed book to them. Many an illiterate rustic possesses far more spiritual understanding of the things of God than do thousands of those who possess a M.A. or D.D. degree. It is *unbelief* which prevents admittance into the Temple of Truth. The Word of God obtains no entrance into minds which are closed by self-conceit and prejudice, nor into hearts blocked by indifference or distrust. “The entrance of Thy words giveth light,” and it is faith which opens the door to admit them. When faith receives the first three chapters of Genesis it has more light upon creation and the course of human history than all the pseudo scientists and false philosophers put together. The miracles which stumble the sceptic present no difficulty to the humble believer. “Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 17:5). AWP

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### LOVE REPROVING.

Some time ago we received the following inquiry from one of our readers: “Do you think it possible to be too critical of Christians (?) nowadays? The reason I put a question-mark after 'Christians' was because I wondered if some of them really are born again of the Spirit. We cannot always tell, can we? Are we not, at all events, to speak the Truth in love? This is a very practical question with us just now.” It is a practical question for *all* who (by grace) really desire to conduct themselves according to the revealed will of God and follow the example which Christ Himself has left us. The wording of these questions indicates that the inquirer does not have in mind the matter of how I should act toward one who has wronged me personally, but rather, what is my duty unto professing Christians with whom I come into contact and whose ways grieve me and whose walk causes me to doubt their regeneration? As others of our readers may be exercised upon these points, we will here amplify the answer given to our friend.

First, let us turn the light of Holy Writ upon this matter: “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). There are three things which call for our prayerful response. First, this is a plain precept bidding us to rebuke an erring brother: it is not optional but obligatory; the words “in any wise” signify that this duty must not be omitted under any pretence. God requires His people to uphold the demands of righteousness. *He* will not wink at sin, nor must *they*. Second, God would also correct our innate self-centredness. We are so occupied with our own wellbeing as to be in danger of neglecting the good of our neighbour. This verse plainly denotes it is a lack of love for others if we see them commit sin with indifference and make no effort to bring them to

repentance and forsake their evil course. A mild, plain, and seasonable reproof is the best way of expressing our solicitude for an erring brother, though it be distasteful to us and unwelcome to him. Third, the marginal rendering “that thou bear not sin for him” means that thou become not an accessory of the act. Silence gives consent: if I rebuke not, I condone evil and share the guilt.

The basic issue which is here raised narrows down to this: *what is it* for a Christian to “act in love” towards others, particularly the wayward? Few words have been employed more inaccurately and loosely in recent years than has “love.” With a great many people it is but a synonym for moral laxity, weakness of character, a taking the line of least resistance, a quiet tolerating of what is felt to be wrong. Multitudes of parents have supposed they were treating their children “lovingly” when they overlooked their folly, made excuses for their wildness, and refused to discipline them for disobedience. They have prided themselves on being “kinder” toward their offspring than the “stern measures” which were meted out to them in their own youth. But it is *laxity* and not love which allows a child to have its own way: “he that spareth his rod *hateth* his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes” (Prov 13:14). Let those of our readers who have young children ponder Proverbs 19:18; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15, 17, and remember those are the words of Him who *is* Love!

That which we have referred to in the above paragraph has been by no means confined to home life: the same evil has held sway in the “churches.” Leniency and weakness have overridden righteousness and faithfulness. Instead of maintaining and enforcing the discipline which God's Word enjoins the great majority of the “churches” have winked at even glaring offences, refusing to deal with those who walk disorderly. And this reprehensible laxity was misnamed “love.” A maudlin sentimentality which shrank from “hurting the feelings” of others ousted all concern for the glory of Christ and the honour of His “house.” This was one of the inevitable effects of the one-sided preaching of the pulpit, where the love and grace of God were constantly proclaimed while His justice and wrath were studiously ignored. God is “light” (1 John 1:5) as well as “love” (1 John 4:8), holy as well as merciful, severe as well as good (Rom 11:22), and unless the balance be preserved between those *two sides* of the Divine character, not only will He be grievously misrepresented, but the most serious results will follow.

“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God: and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God” (1 John 4:7). Christian love is not a thing of nature, but is entirely supernatural. It is not a part of our “personality” or anything which issues from our “disposition,” but is a Divine communication received at the new birth. It is neither a sentiment, emotion, nor passion, but a holy principle which is spiritual in its origin, its nature, its characteristics, its manifestations. But alas, many of God's own children are to-day so ill-taught, so ignorant, so carnal, that they are unable to recognize true brotherly love when they see it in exercise. Their thinking is so much coloured by the world, they are so much corrupted by mingling with hollow professors, that they mistake pleasantries and cordiality for spiritual love. They forget that some who make no profession at all are naturally genial, kindly, warm-hearted, courteous, sympathetic. Christian love is neither the milk of human kindness nor creature good-will perfected by grace. Much that passes for it is merely the amiability and affability of the flesh.

How are we to know when we truly “love one another”? When we feel our hearts drawn out to them because of their affableness, their charming demeanour, their “sweet” ways? No, for appearances are

deceptive. A winsome smile, a hearty hand-shake, a kiss, is no sign of the new nature, as Judas' kissing of Christ demonstrated. Nor does a suave style or honeyed-mouth expressions prove anything to the point: rather does the Christian need to be doubly on his guard in the company of those who flatter him: ponder Proverbs 20:19; 26:28; Psalm 12:3. Then how are we to know when we “love one another” and why they love us? When we truly seek their highest good: when they aim at our spiritual wellbeing. The one who evidences the most spiritual love for me is he who is ever seeking to promote my eternal interests by wise counsels, by salutary warnings, by timely rebukes, by godly encouragements; and if I be spiritual I shall love him in return for his piety, his heavenly-mindedness, his faithfulness.

“Open rebuke is better than secret love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Prov 27:25,26). Ah, my reader, little as you may like it, the one who “wounds” you the most may be the best friend you have, who has the most spiritual love for you. But the one who winks at your faults, is silent about your sins, and refuses to rebuke you for what is dishonouring to God, is your enemy and *hates* you! Alas, what a low plane even the people of God are now living upon. Many of them are so easily ruffled that, the least criticism of them and they are “hurt,” offended; which shows they have more self-love than the love of God in them. O for grace to say with the Psalmist, “Let the righteous smite me, it shall be a kindness; and let him reprove me, it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head” (141:5). “Rebuke a wise man, and he will love thee” (Prov 9:8)—how few of the “wise” are now left!

“By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God and keep His commandments” (1 John 5:2). Go back to the previous verse for the connection: “Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and every one that loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him.” We love the brethren because they have been made “partakers of the Divine nature”: it is *that*, and nothing pertaining to the old creation, which is the uniting bond. How that lifts us entirely out of the realm of nature, into the spiritual sphere! It is love for God which produces love for those who bear His image. And what is the touch-stone of my love to God? Not rapturous feelings, nor beautiful words of devotion, nor heartily singing His praises, but by keeping His commandments: John 14:15, 21, 24; 15:10. The strength of my love for God is to be gauged by the measure of my obedience to His Word. The same principle holds good in my relations with the brethren: love to them will be manifested by efforts to encourage them in the path of obedience—and that necessarily involves rebuking them for disobedience.

To come more immediately to the opening questions. “Is it possible to be too critical of Christians (?) nowadays?” Why the qualifying “nowadays”? Has God lowered His standard to meet these evil times? Is it permissible or expedient for me to compromise because the present generation is so lax and carnal? Do not the days in which our lot is cast call for a clearer drawing of the line between the Church and the world? If so, should not this help to determine my conduct toward the individual? We are not unmindful that large numbers hold the view that God requires less from people in degenerate times, but we know of nothing in His Word which supports them. Rather are such days the very time when the Christian most needs to show his colours, when shallowness and hollowness marks the religious profession all around there is greater urgency for us to make manifest the reality that we are “strangers and pilgrims” in this scene. The Scriptures are just as much the Rule and the sole rule, for *us* to walk by, as they were for our more godly forebears and in the Day to come *we* shall be judged by them as truly as they will be. It is never right to do wrong—nor to condone wrong.

John, the apostle of love, began his third epistle with these words, “The elder unto the well-beloved Gaius, whom I love *in the Truth*.” What a needed word is this for to-day, when so much that passes for love, even in avowedly Christian circles, is nothing but a sickly sentimentality at the expense of the Truth. One of the outstanding cries in the religious world is to this effect though we have differed in our beliefs and practices let us now sink our differences and come together in love. When pastor of a church in Sydney we were regarded as a narrow-minded bigot because on what Rome calls “good Friday” we refused to take part in a “united Communion service,” where Fundamentalists and Modernists, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Creationists and Evolutionists were invited to gather together and thereby express “fraternal love” for one another. What a travesty and mockery! The wisdom which is from above is “*first pure, then peaceable*” (James 3:17). The more I am walking in the Truth and the more my brother is doing the same, the more cause have we to love one another.

It may be helpful to answer the opening question by changing the form of it: Is it possible to be too critical *of myself*? May I permit myself a certain amount of indulgence, exclude some part of my life from the control of God, be less strict about some matter than others? In the light of such verses as “Take us the foxes, the *little* foxes, that spoil the vines” (Song of Sol 2:15), “grow up into Him in *all* things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15), “*whatsoever* ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor 10:31) is there any difficulty in answering that question! If not, am I justified in countenancing a lower standard for others than I seek to apply to myself? Am I not required to love my neighbour as myself? And am I doing so if I gloss over something in him which I know to be against his or her spiritual interests and can only work ill for him? If it be my plain duty to warn him against physical evils, then on what ground am I justified in being silent when I see spiritual danger menacing him?

But let it be pointed out that I certainly am not warranted in being “critical” about the conduct of others, unless I am accustomed to unsparingly judge *myself*. It is the very worst species of hypocrisy to point the finger of condemnation at another while I am guilty of something equally bad. I must first cast out the beam from mine own eye before I am qualified to perform so delicate an operation as seeking to remove a mote from my brother's eye. Since there has been a “beam” in mine own eye that is cause for humility, and if the humility be real and deep it will preserve me from acting proudly and haughtily when seeking not to “criticise,” but—*help* my brother. Nothing is more un-Christianlike than for me to berate an erring one in a spirit of self-righteousness and in tones of self-superiority, rather than in the spirit of “consider thyself, lest thou also be tempted” (Gal 6:1). If I am to wash my brother's feet from the defilements of the way, then I must needs take the place of lowliness in order to serve him.

On the other hand, we must guard against going to an opposite extreme. If pride and haughtiness are to be reprehended, mock humility or even an undue occupation with our own frailty and faultiness is not to be commended. If we must wait until we are blameless then there are many precepts of Scripture we cannot act upon; if we must tarry until our own character and conduct be faultless then we are disqualified from rebuking anybody. We greatly fear that many have created their own difficulty or deterrent through a wrongful appropriation of those words “he that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her” (John 8:7). How often have we heard professing Christians say, when it had become their manifest duty to admonish another, Who am I to cast stones at others? It should be remembered that John 8:7 was not spoken to conscientious saints, jealous of the honour of the Lord, anxious to promote the good of others,

but to hypocritical pharisees, who were deliberately seeking to ensnare Christ.

Is it possible to be too critical of Christians? It is certainly possible to expect too much from them and then be irritated because they fail to produce what we look for. If our thoughts be governed by Scripture, which declares “in many things we all offend” (James 3:2), if we bear in mind the frailties—some of them glaring ones—of the most eminent characters mentioned in the Word, if we constantly remind ourselves of how far short we come of the standard God has set before us, then we ought to be preserved from looking for anything approaching perfection in Christians. They too are men and women of “like passions” as ourselves. Hence the force of “*forbearing* one another in love” (Eph 4:2): yet that must not be twisted into “winking at one another's faults” or condoning sin under the pretence of love.

No, we cannot “always tell” whether a professing Christian be a regenerate or unregenerate person, and therefore it behoves us to be cautious and conservative, lest we be guilty of giving that which is holy unto dogs (Matt 7:6). It is a very serious and solemn matter to encourage a deluded soul in his deception, as we *do* when we lead him to believe *we* regard him as a Christian. But how is this to be avoided? By a withholding the tokens of fellowship—for example, refusing to address as “Brother” or “Sister”—from all whom we stand in doubt of, especially from those whose walk is manifestly worldly and contrary to the precepts of Scripture. While we cannot read the hearts of those we mix with, we can test their outward life by the Word, and if its general tenor be opposed to the requirements of holiness and be contrary to the example of Christ, we certainly are not warranted in regarding them as children of God.

Certainly we should be “loving in rebuking sin.” It is in love God chastens His people, that they “might be partakers of His holiness” (Heb 12:6,10). We are bidden to “speak the Truth in love,” and Christ was doing so as truly when denouncing the pharisees in Matthew 23 as when He was comforting His disciples in John 14, but does that mean His countenance, the tone of His voice, or His general bearing was the same? He ever spoke the Truth in love, but if some would re-read the four Gospels with this particular thought in mind it might cause them to revise, or at least modify their present conception of what speaking “in love” really is. Something depends upon the fault committed: mole-hills are not to be magnified into mountains. There are times when it is fitting to rebuke “sharply” (Titus 1:13), as Christ did in Luke 24:25, but for the most part it should be done in “the spirit of meekness” (Gal 6:1). There is a happy medium between harshness and firmness, as there is between sentimentality and tenderness.

We know of a small church, far removed from these parts, the pastor and members of which are seeking to act one toward another in a spirit and manner which we deem highly commendable. Its minister tells us “I have never seen a congregation more pliable to the Word of God, more willing to rectify wrongs,—endeavouring to walk as Christ would have them walk. Each member is interviewed by the joint-elders-group concerning their position listed in the church discipline; and further, each one applying for membership specifies that it is his desire to have a pastor who will deal with the sin problems of that member as a shepherd would the problems of the sheep.” That admirably expresses our own convictions: love ministering to the needy as a shepherd to the sheep. AWP

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### **THE WORD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS.**

At no point does the uniqueness of the Divine Oracles appear more strikingly and conspicuously than in their teachings concerning righteousness. Those teachings are at direct variance with the beliefs and conceits of men the world over: in fact so radical and unpalatable are its pronouncements on this subject that many of those who profess to receive the Scriptures as a Divine revelation have exhausted their ingenuity in attempting to explain away some of its plainest statements. The sweeping assertion that among the sons of men “there is none righteous, no, not one,” but that “all the world” stands “guilty before God” (Rom. 3:10,20), is one which never had its origin in any human brain. The declaration that “all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags” (Isa. 64:6) is too distasteful to the proud heart of fallen man to have been invented by “the Church.” The question, how can the unrighteous become righteous before the Divine Judge? is one which, when duly weighed, defies solution by human wisdom. If he had no other evidence for the inspiration of the Scriptures than their teaching upon righteousness, they would suffice to convince this writer of their Divine Authorship.

“The Word of righteousness” (Heb. 5:13). The word righteousness is a forensic one, being the antithesis of guiltiness. Reduced to its simplest form it means righteous, or up to the required standard. It therefore presupposes a rule by which conduct is measured, and that Rule is the will of God as revealed in His Word. The will of God for man is summed up in the Divine Law, and righteousness is nothing more or less than a perfect conformity to the Law in heart and life. Hence we find the Lord saying “Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet” (Isa. 28:17), that is, all shall yet be measured by

the immutable standard of His Law. Thus we may say, in the first place, that the Word of God is given this particular title because righteousness itself has no other *Rule* to be regulated by. “All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for *instruction in righteousness*” (2 Tim. 3:16).

Second, the Word is so denominated because righteousness is its prime and inexorable *demand*. The Law is inflexible and implacable. It makes no favourable allowance for human infirmities, constitutional weaknesses, or personal defects. All possibility of misapprehension on this score is excluded if we weigh its solemn declaration, “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the Book of the Law to do them” (Gal. 3:10). “Cursed is every one”—without any exception of persons, without any regard to pleas of human weakness or violent temptations. “That continueth not”: it is not sufficient to observe those holy commandments in the general tenor of our lives: our course of conduct must be without the slightest intermission from the earliest dawn of reason to the final breath we draw. In *all* things: we must refrain from every sin forbidden and the least approach to them, and practice every virtue enjoined and every duty enforced. The Law insists upon an obedience which is perfect in its principle, perfect in all its parts, perfect in every degree, and in each of these respects, *perpetual*; and pronounces a curse on the slightest failure.

The spirituality and strictness of such a Law reveals the ineffable purity and immaculate righteousness of its Author. It shows that His nature is so holy and His will so immutable that He will not tolerate the least sin nor spare the slightest transgression. It tells us that those sins in which the light of nature could discern but little turpitude, that those faults which the light of reason is ready to excuse as mere trifles, are unspeakably odious and intolerably loathsome in the eyes of Jehovah. Only when the soul is made acutely aware of this does it cry out with the Psalmist, “my flesh trembleth for fear of Thee and I am afraid of Thy judgments” (119:120). It is because of their sottish insensibility of this that the vast majority of our fellows are sleeping in a false security and dreaming in presumptuous hope, instead of crying to God for mercy and fleeing from the wrath to come. It is because of their willful ignorance and excuseless blindness that the religious crowd knows not that “by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight” (Rom. 3:20).

Third, the Word is so denominated because righteousness is its *grand revelation*. Thousands of years ago the questions raised “How then can man be justified with God?” (Job 25:4) and that perplexity had remained unresolved until the end of time had not God Himself supplied the solution. In the Scriptures He has made known a perfect righteousness provided for the unrighteous. It was for that reason the apostle declared, “I am not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ—however it may be deemed foolishness by the sophisticated Greeks or prove a stumbling-block to the carnal Jews—for it is the power of God unto salvation”: the grand Instrument which He has ordained for that purpose, and which He will certainly crown with the success He has appointed. And wherein lies the chief and distinguishing glory of the Gospel? “For therein is the *righteousness* of God revealed, from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:16,17): not demanded of impotent sinners, but made ready for their free acceptance—held aloft by a promising God, appropriated by believing souls.

After furnishing conclusive proof that Jew and Gentile alike are destitute of righteousness, the apostle

went on to say “But now the righteousness of God without the Law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:21,22). It is a perfect righteousness, which obliterates all guilt and bestows an inalienable title to eternal life. “It is styled the righteousness of God by way of superlative pre-eminence in opposition to any righteousness of our own and in contradistinction from the righteousness of all creatures whatsoever” (James Hervey). But more: it is the “righteousness of God” because God the Father devised it from all eternity, God the Son wrought it out here upon earth, and God the Holy Spirit makes it good to us by working in us a faith which appropriates the same. To sum up Romans 1:16, 17 and 3:21, 22: salvation is by righteousness, righteousness is found in Christ, that righteousness becomes ours by faith.

In Romans 4 the apostle proceeded to illustrate his doctrine by two notable examples. Abraham, who was the most eminent of the patriarchs, the most illustrious pattern of piety among the O.T. saints, the “friend of God” (James 2:23). David, who was the most zealous of the kings, the “sweet Psalmist of Israel,” a “man after God's own heart” (1 Sam. 13,14). How then were they justified before God? Not as upright beings who could claim it, but as sinful creatures who must implore it; not by their own obedience, but by faith in the promised Messiah. Abraham “worked not” with a view to obtaining justification, but “believed on Him that justifieth the ungodly” (vv. 1-5). How was David justified? By his zeal for God's glory or by his noble services for his fellow-men? No, by a righteousness imputed, even the righteousness of Christ, that blessed redemption through which “iniquities are forgiven and sins are covered” (vv. 6-8).

Fourth, the Word is so designated because righteousness is its *chief bestowment*. “Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil” (Matt. 5:17) said Christ. He fulfilled the Law by rendering to it a personal, perfect and perpetual obedience as the Surety of His people, and the moment they savingly believe in Him His obedience is reckoned to their account and becomes their legal righteousness before God (Rom. 4:24; 5:19). The perfect righteousness of Christ is “upon all them that believe” (Rom. 3:22). It is their “wedding garment” (Matt. 22:12) the “best robe” (Luke 15:22) by which they are covered. And thus may each one say, “In the Lord have I righteousness and strength” (Isa. 45:24). Now can he declare “I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness” (Isa. 61:10). A righteous nature is also communicated, which produces righteous conduct: “everyone that doeth righteousness is born of God” (1 John 2:29). Righteousness imputed, righteousness imparted, constitute our salvation. Then let us unite with the Psalmist in exclaiming, “My mouth shall show forth Thy righteousness and Thy salvation all the day...I will go in the strength of the Lord God. I will make mention of Thy righteousness, even of *Thine only*” (Psa. 71:15,16). AWP

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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### **REWARDS.**

We closed our previous article on this subject by quoting Galatians 6:7, 8, pointing out that the joys and sorrows of the future life bear the same relation to what is wrought in this as the harvest does to the sowing, one being the consequence, the fruit or reward of the other. There is a definite relation subsisting between sowing to the spirit and reaping life everlasting, between what is done unto Christ in this life and the crowning in the life to come. This relation is just as real as that between sowing to the flesh and reaping corruption, despising and defying Christ and the torments of Hell, though it is not in all respects the same. The portion allotted the wicked is that of due and personal desert, but that bestowed on the righteous is not so, it being entirely of grace, a matter of largess, for it is impossible to lay God under obligation to us or make Him our Debtor. Eternal life is bestowed upon the believer as the reward of Christ's undertaking, because of what He wrought in his stead and on his behalf. Yet that is not the only angle from which the bestowal of eternal life is viewed in Scripture: it is also represented as the end or outcome of our bearing "fruit unto holiness" in the service of God (Rom. 6:22).

Before amplifying the last sentence let us point out the fundamental difference between the "sowing" of the wicked and that of the righteous. All the works of the wicked are essentially their own, having no higher rise than their corrupt nature: issuing from their evil hearts produced of themselves; and as bitter waters can only proceed from a bitter fountain, so their own works are polluted and sinful. But it is quite otherwise with the good works of the righteous: they proceed not from the depraved principle of the flesh, but from the "spirit" or new nature which was communicated to them at regeneration. They are the product

of God's working in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure, and therefore does He aver “from Me is thy fruit” (Hosea 14:8). Even the water of the purest fountain is no longer pure when it flows through an impure channel, and because the flesh in the Christian defiles those good works he performs, but of which God is the Author and Spring, they could not be accepted and rewarded by Him were they not also cleansed by the blood of Christ and perfumed with His merits. Thus we have no ground for boasting or self-gratulation.

Whenever we think or speak of the grace of God we must bear in mind that it reigns “through righteousness” (Rom. 5:21). Grace does not override any of the other attributes of God, but is always exercised in perfect harmony therewith and also in full accord with His governmental ways. Therein we behold the “manifold wisdom of God” by displaying in the same act both His mercy and justice, His bounty and His holiness. Therefore we find the Word expressly affirming “For God is *not unrighteous* to forget your work and labour of love which ye have showed toward His name, in that ye have ministered to the saints and do minister” (Heb. 6:10). It is indeed an act of infinite condescension upon His part that He should even deign to take notice of our trifling performances: it is equally an act of pure grace that He should be pleased to reward the same, for no matter how self-sacrificing or arduous those performances, they were naught but the bare discharge of our bounden duty: nevertheless it is also an act of righteousness when He approves of our services and richly recompenses the same both in this life and the life to come.

It is no more erroneous or inconsistent to affirm that the *future* reward will be bestowed upon the Christian both for Christ's sake (primarily and meritoriously) and because of his own obedience (according to the terms of the new covenant and the governmental principles of God), than it is to say that our *present* peace and joy flow directly from the mediation of Christ, and subordinately yet truly so from our own obedience and fidelity. “Great peace have they which love Thy Law” (Psa. 119:165 and Isa. 58:13,14). Those who deny themselves for Christ's sake and the Gospel's are assured of a rich recompense: “a hundredfold now in this time” as well as “in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:30). “Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come” (1 Tim. 4:8). Though our obedience be not meritorious, yet God deems it (as the fruit of His Spirit) virtuous and amiable and meet for His approbation, and as a Being of perfect rectitude and benevolence it becomes Him to cordially own the same. If *future* rewards clashed either with Divine grace or the merits of Christ then *present* ones must do the same, for a difference in place or time can make no difference as to the nature of things themselves.

In a recent article on the Perseverance of the Saints we pointed out that the subject of rewards needs to be given its due place in connection with that doctrine. And this for a twofold reason. First, to arouse the careless and expose the formalist. This is one of the many safeguards by which God has hedged about the precious truth of the everlasting bliss of His people. That bliss is not awaiting triflers and sluggards. If there be no sowing to the spirit in this life, there will be no reaping of the spirit in the life to come. This requires to be pressed upon all who claim to be Christians—never more so than in this day of vain pretensions, when hollow professors abound on every side. A faith which produces no good works is a worthless one. A branch in the Vine that bears not fruit is doomed to be burned (John 15:6). The man who hides his talent, instead of improving the same, is cast into “outer darkness” (Matt. 25:24-30). If the cross be avoided there will be no crown. “If we suffer [for Christ's sake] we shall also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us” (2 Tim. 2:12).

Second, this subject of rewards should be set before God's people as an incentive to perseverance, as an encouragement to fidelity. How often have we heard one and another say, The more I try to do that which is right, the worse things seem to become; the harder I endeavour to please God, the more circumstances appear to combine against me. Ah, that may be for the testing of your faith. But whether it be for that end or no, seek grace to lay hold of that word “And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not” (Gal. 6:9). Here is the very application which the apostle made of what he had said in the previous verses upon sowing and reaping, as the opening “And” shows. Here is part of that Bread which God has provided for His children when they are dejected and enervated by the difficulties and discouragements of the way. God has provided a bountiful recompense for our labours and this should stimulate us in the performance of duty.

Not only is the promise of reward set before the saints as an incentive to activity, but also as consolation in sorrow, to enable them to endure the oppositions encountered. “Blessed are they that are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad, for great is your reward in heaven” (Matt. 5:10-12). This is the manner in which Christ proffers comfort to His sorely-pressed servants: by assuring them of the grand compensation awaiting them on High. Then let us not pretend to a wisdom superior to His, and withhold from His children this part of their Bread because, forsooth, we imagine that to act thus is to impugn the grace of God. As Matthew Henry rightly says upon Matthew 5:12 “Heaven, at last, will be an abundant recompense for all the difficulties we meet with in our way. This is that which hath borne up the suffering saints in all ages.”

“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and enduring substance” (Heb. 10:34). Here is a pertinent example of the powerful and beneficial influence which a believing view of the promised recompense exerts upon sorely-pressed Christians. These Hebrews had been cruelly despoiled of their earthly possession, and most remarkable had been their deportment under such a trial. So far from giving way to bitter lamentations and revilings, which is the ordinary thing with worldlings on such occasions, or even enduring their loss fatalistically and stoically, they took it cheerfully and gladly. And why? how was such victory over the flesh made possible? Because their faith and hope were in lively exercise; they viewed the promised reward, their inheritance on High; with their bodily eyes they beheld their temporal affliction, but with the eyes of their souls the eternal glory prepared for them. That recompense is here called an “enduring substance” as elsewhere “weight of glory” (2 Cor. 4:17), in contrast from everything down here which is but a shadow, a mirage which vanishes away.

This was the motive which inspired Abraham: “By faith he sojourned in the land of promise as in a strange country, dwelling in tents [not erecting a castle or palace] with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. *For* he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:9,10). *That* was the grand inducement which made him keep on conducting himself as a stranger and pilgrim in this transient scene. That was what braced him to endure all the hardships of the way: his heart was occupied not with Canaan but with Heaven—he looked beyond the toilsome sowing to the blissful reaping. In like manner this was the motive which actuated Moses; “when he was come to years [he] refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of

God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt.” And why? “for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Heb. 11:24-26). His great renunciation in the present was prompted by faith's laying hold of the grand remuneration in the future.

But a far greater than Abraham or Moses is presented as our Exemplar in this, as in all things else. Of none less than the Redeemer is it recorded “who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God” (Heb. 12:2). A variety of motives moved the Saviour to endure the cross—love for His Father (John 14:31), the glory of His Father (John 12:27,28), love for His Church (Eph. 5:25)—but among them was the prospect of future recompense. In the previous verse we are exhorted to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and run with patience the race that is set before us, and the supreme inducement so to do is, “looking unto Jesus...who for the joy that was set before Him endured.” Whether that “joy” consisted in the answer to His prayer in (John 17:5), the exaltation of Him above all creatures (Eph. 1:20-22; Phil. 2:9), or His seeing of the travail of His soul and being satisfied (Isa. 53:11) when He shall present the Church to Himself a glorious Church (Eph. 5:27), or all three, yet the fact remains that *this* was an essential motive or reason which prompted the Lord Jesus to do and suffer—that future “joy” was ever before the eye of the Captain of our salvation as He ran His race and finished His course: the prize was kept steadily in view.

It should be pointed out that promises of reward are not restricted to those engaged in the public service of God but are also made to the rank and file of His people. We call attention to this lest humble saints should allow Satan to deprive them of their legitimate portion on the ground that they are “not worthy” to appropriate the same—personal worthiness or unworthiness does not at all enter into the question, as the greatest of the apostles has made quite evident (1 Cor. 15:9,10). It is true there are distinctive promises made unto and rewards reserved for the ministers of the Gospel (1 Peter 5:1-4), nevertheless, there are not a few made unto the whole family of God: Ephesians 6:8 etc. Note how jealously Paul guarded this very point, for after declaring he had fought a good fight, finished his course and kept the faith, he said, “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day,” he immediately added, “and not to me only, but unto *all them also* that love His appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8).

Said Paul, “Brethren I count not myself to have apprehended, but this one thing I do: forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 3:13,14). Here we behold the saint running for the “prize”: that is what inspired his self-discipline and strenuous endeavours, that was the inducement or incentive. But the prize will not be accorded him for the merit of his running, but because of the worthiness of Christ: yet without such pressing onward, the prize would not be secured. It is sovereign grace which has appointed this prize for the runner, yet unless the “mark” or goal be actually reached, it is not obtained. The prize or “reward” or “glory” is set before us in the Word for faith to lay hold of and for hope to enjoy in confident (not doubtful) expectation, as a motive to stir us unto the use of those means leading thereunto and to make us more fervent in those duties without the performance of which it cannot be reached.

We will close by briefly considering two objections. There will probably be those ready to charge us with inculcating creature deserts, that what we have written is nothing else than an adoption of the Romish heresy of human merits. Our reply is that we have advanced nothing but what is clearly taught in Holy Writ itself. If due attention be paid to the *connections* in which the term “reward” is found this at once rules out of court the Papish conceit. Take its first occurrence: God said to Abraham “I am thy exceeding great Reward” (Gen. 15:1): what had the patriarch done to *entitle* him to such a Portion? Where the question of desert is raised, justice requires a due ratio between the performance and the remuneration, but there is *no* proportion between the works and sufferings of the Christian and the “exceeding and eternal weight of glory” promised him. Mark the use of the term in Matthew 6:8 and then ask, On what ground does God recompense our prayers? Certainly it is not for any worth which is in them. There cannot possibly be any merit in begging at the Throne of Grace!

Again; it is objected that to present rewards as an inducement unto fidelity is to foster a mercenary spirit, to reduce the Christian unto a mere hireling—performing his labours for the sake of gain. This is quite an unwarrantable, conclusion. Sordidness lies not in aiming at a reward in general, but in subordinating piety to self-interests, as they who followed Christ for the loaves and fishes (John 6:26). A mercenary spirit actuates him who performs duty solely for the sake of remuneration, or at least, principally for it. We are to view the reward not as a debt due us, but as that which the grace of God has promised, and which His bounty deems suited unto our obedience. Rewards are presented to us as an incitement to gracious activity, to cheer us under self-denials, to strengthen our hearts when meeting opposition. It is the minister's task not only to urge believers unto the performance of duty, but also to hold before them the promised recompenses. That eyeing of the reward in nowise signifies a lack of love for God is clear from the case of Christ Himself (Heb. 12:2). AWP

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January, 1944

### **A PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR.**

This is our desire both for our readers and for ourselves. But the mere wishing or desiring of it will not bring the same to pass. What more is necessary? Only God can grant us prosperity either spiritual or temporal, and we must submit to his good pleasure. True, but He is not capricious in this. Prosperity or the absence of it is not a fortuitous thing, nor is it the product of a blind and inexorable fate. If we enjoy not prosperity the fault is entirely our own, and we are dishonest if we ascribe it solely unto the sovereignty of God. “In returning and rest shall ye be saved, in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and *ye would not*” (Isa. 30:15)—had it not been flagrantly dishonest if they attributed their disquietude and fears to the sovereign will of God? “O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! then had thy peace been as a river” (Isa. 48:18)—then how wicked to charge God with being responsible for their lack of peace.

If we consult the Scriptures we shall find definite teaching on this subject: that there are clearly-revealed laws which we must observe, conditions which we are required to meet, if we are to enjoy prosperity. Let us first consider one or two things which *hinder* prosperity. “Why transgress ye the commandments of the Lord that ye cannot prosper” (2 Chron. 24:20). Ah, here is the cause of all our troubles; disobedience, for “the way of transgressors is hard” (Prov. 13:15). Observe how emphatically and absolutely it is expressed: “ye cannot prosper”—a holy God will not place a premium on insubordination. He may suffer “the wicked” to flourish as a green bay tree, for he is like a beast being fattened for the slaughter; but not so with those who profess His name. Disobedience, then, chokes the channel of blessing. “He that covereth

his sins shall not prosper” (Prov. 28:13). Unconfessed sin in the heart of a believer is like a worm at the root of prosperity. “If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me” (Psa. 66:18)—prayer is then futile. Unless we keep short accounts with God we shall not enjoy His smile. Jeremiah 10:21 tells us what prevents “pastors” from prospering: self-sufficiency, failing to be cast entirely upon the Lord.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* shalt thou make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:8). Here is the positive side, the making known the conditions which regulate and determine prosperity, as the repeated “then” plainly intimates. The passage begins at verse 5, and the whole of verses 5-8 should be attentively weighed. Let us first anticipate an objection by asking the question “was it written for his sake alone” (Rom. 4:23)? Undoubtedly those words had a special reference to Joshua himself, yet that they have a wider bearing is clear from other passages, and that they have a general application to God's children today is definitely established by the New Testament. But as some of our readers have come under the influence of those who would rob the Christian of his rightful portion, under the pretext of “rightly dividing the Word of Truth,” we must labour the point.

Note then how unhesitatingly David appropriated these words of the Lord to Joshua when he spoke to his son, for he emphatically assured him that if Divine grace enabled him to “keep the Law of the Lord his God” taking heed to “fulfill the statutes and judgments” of it, “*then* shalt thou prosper” (1 Chron. 22:12,13). But more pertinently still, observe how the apostle expressly appropriates the promise of Joshua 1:5 “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” and insists that it belongs equally to the whole household of faith, immediately adding “so that *we* may boldly say, The Lord is *my* Helper” (Heb. 13:5,6). That precious promise of God, then, belongs as truly *to me* as it did to Joshua of old. Are not the needs of believers the same in one age as in another? Is not God affected alike unto all of His children: does He not bear to them the same love? If He would not desert Joshua, He will not desert you! Consequently, if I would ascertain the laws which will determine my prosperity, I must pay attention to those which regulated *his*.

“This Book of the Law shall not depart out of thy mouth.” It was the Rule given to act by. In Joshua's case it furnished him with Divine authority for his conduct in the governing of Israel. In our case we may give these words a spiritual meaning. God's Word is our appointed food: thus the “mouth” speaks to us of feeding upon it. In verse 6 God says, “Be strong and of a good courage,” and in verse 7 adds, “only be thou strong and very courageous that [in order that] thou mayest observe to do according to all the Law.” Obedience to God calls for firmness, resolution, boldness. Without it we shall yield unto temptations to compromise, being intimidated by the ridicule and opposition of our fellows. How, then, is this strength and courage to be obtained? By feeding on the Word, being “nourished up in the words of faith” (1 Tim. 4:6), having the Law of the Lord continually in our “mouth.” This is the interpretation made by the apostle; appropriate that promise “I will never leave thee” and then, says he, every believer may confidently declare “The Lord is *my* Helper, and I will *not* fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6). There is the proof that feeding on the Word imparts strength and courage.

“But thou shalt meditate therein day and night.” Only thus will its injunctions be fixed in the memory:

only thus shall we be able to ascertain our duty: only thus shall we discern the rightful application of the Divine precepts to all the varied details of our daily lives. It is entirely our own fault if we be ignorant of God's "mind" in connection with any situation confronting us. God's will for us is revealed in His Word, and "a good understanding have all they that do His commandments" (Psa. 111:10). The more I am regulated by the Divine Rule, the more shall I be preserved from the "mistakes" or folly which characterises those who follow a course of self-pleasing. But in order to *do* God's commandments I must be conversant with them and in order to perceive their breadth and specific application unto any problem or decision confronting me, I must "meditate therein day and night." Meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. Prosperity eludes the dilitary and careless.

"That thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein." *This* must be the dominating motive and object. God's Word is to be appropriated and masticated—fed and meditated upon—first and foremost, day in and day out. Not for the purpose of understanding its prophecies or obtaining an insight into its mysteries, but in order to learn God's will for me, and having learned it to conform thereto. God's Word is given to us chiefly not to gratify curiosity or to entertain our imagination, but as "a lamp to our feet and a light unto our path" (Psa. 119:105) in this dark world. It is a Rule for us to walk by: it is a heavenly Standard for the regulation of all our conduct. It points out the things to be avoided, the things which would harm us. It tells of the things to be followed and practiced, the things which are for our good, our peace. It contains not only good advice, but is clothed with Divine authority, commanding implicit and unqualified obedience.

"For then—if we feed on the Word, if we constantly meditate upon its precepts and promises, if we render to it entire obedience—shalt thou make thy way prosperous and then thou shalt have good success." The promise is emphatic, unqualified, sure. If then this new year is not a prosperous one for me the fault is entirely my own: it will be because I have failed to meet the conditions prescribed in the context. Turn to 2 Chronicles 20:20 and see how well Jehoshaphat understood the secret of prosperity. Mark what occasioned the prosperity of Hezekiah (2 Chron. 31:20,21). Compare Job 36:11. Ponder all that precedes the last clause of Psalm 1:3. "But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man *shall be blessed* in his deed" (James 1:25). AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

February, 1944

### **OUR RIGHTEOUS REDEEMER.**

Does such a title have somewhat of a strange sound to the ear of the reader? Is that adjective unfamiliar in such a connection? Probably the great majority of us are far more accustomed to such expressions as “our loving Redeemer” and “our gracious Redeemer,” or even “our mighty Redeemer.” We confess that to the best of our recollection we have never heard this particular expression used, nor do we remember ever coming across it in our reading. Our employment of it here is not because we are striving after originality, nor is it coined for the purpose of alliteration. No, rather is such an appellation required by the teaching of Scripture, in fact if we carefully observe where the Holy Spirit has placed the emphasis it is incumbent upon us that we should conform our terminology thereto. Test your memory and see how many passages you can recall where either “loving” or “gracious” is used as an adjective in connection with Christ. If memory fails, consult a concordance, and then perhaps you will be surprised that neither of them occurs a single time! Now test your memory with the word “righteous” and see how many passages come to mind where the Lord Jesus is referred to as such.

In Isaiah 53:10 Christ is referred to as “My righteous Servant,” in Jeremiah 23:5 as “a righteous Branch,” and in the next verse as “the Lord our righteousness.” In Malachi 4:2 as “the Sun of righteousness,” in Luke 23:47 as a “righteous Man,” in 2 Timothy 4:8 as “the righteous Judge.” In Hebrews 7:2, 3 He is seen as the antitypical Melchizedek or “King of righteousness”; while in 1 John 2:1, as our Advocate with the Father, He is termed “Jesus Christ the righteous.” In addition, we find the same Greek word (*dikaïos*) rendered “just” in the following passages: in Matthew 27:19 Pilate's wife sends a warning to her husband

saying “Have thou nothing to do with this just [righteous] Man”; while in verse 34 of the same chapter Pilate himself declared “I am innocent of the blood of this just Person.” In Acts 3:14 and James 5:6 He is denominated “the Just,” and in Acts 7:52 and 22:14 “the Just One”; while in 1 Peter 3:18 we have the well-known words “Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the Just for the unjust”—actually rendered “the righteous for the unrighteous” by the American R.V. When Zechariah predicted His entry into Jerusalem, riding on the back of an ass, he said, “Behold, thy King cometh to thee, He is just,” and in Revelation 19:11, where He is depicted on a white horse, it is said “in righteousness He doth judge and make war.”

It hardly requires to be pointed out that, in all of the above passages, the Father's “Fellow” and Equal is viewed in His official character, as the God-man Mediator. It is equally evident that those verses intimate that the Lord Jesus is righteous in His person, in the administration of His office, in the discharge of the great commission given to Him. Before His incarnation it was announced “righteousness shall be the girdle of His loins and faithfulness the girdle of His reins” (Isa. 11:5), and Christ Himself affirmed by the Spirit of prophecy “I have preached righteousness in the great congregation” (Psa. 40:9). There was no fault or failure in His performing of the honourous and momentous task committed to Him, as His own words to the Father prove: “I have glorified Thee on the earth, I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do” (John 17:4). God's owning of Christ as “My righteous Servant” signifies that He excellently executed the work entrusted to Him: as the Holy Spirit declares, He “was faithful to Him that appointed Him” (Heb. 3:2), and when the Father rewarded Him He said, “Thou lovest righteousness and hatest wickedness” (Psa. 45:7).

But further: Christ is the righteous Redeemer of his people because their righteousness is *in Him*. He wrought out a perfect righteousness for them, which, upon their believing in Him, is imputed or reckoned to their account, and therefore is He designated “the Lord our righteousness” (Jer. 23:6). Christ was righteous not as a private Person, not for Himself alone, but for us sinners and our salvation. Throughout He acted as God's righteous Servant and as His people's righteous Sponsor. He lived and died that all the infinite merits of His obedience might be made over to them. In the justifying of His sinful people God neither disregarded nor dishonoured His Law: instead He has “established” it (Rom. 3:31). The Redeemer was “made under the Law” (Gal. 4:4) and its strictness was not relaxed nor was one iota of its requirements abated in connection with Him. Christ rendered to the Law a personal, perfect and perpetual obedience, and therefore did He “magnify the Law and make it honourable” (Isa. 42:21). Consequently God is not only gracious but “just” at the very moment He is “the Justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Rom 3:26), because Jesus satisfied every requirement of righteousness in the stead and behalf of all who trust in Him.

In the righteous Redeemer, then, we find the answer to the question, How can those who have no righteousness of their own and who are utterly unable to procure any, become righteous before God? How can I, who am a mass of corruption, draw nigh unto the ineffably Holy One and look up into His face in peace? By coming to God as unrighteous, acknowledging my inability to remove my unrighteousness, offering nothing to palliate or propitiate Him. By reaching forth the beggar's hand and thankfully receiving the righteousness *He* has provided. Because we were unable to reach up to the holy requirements or righteousness of the Law, God has brought down His righteousness to us: “I bring near My righteousness” (Isa. 46:13). That righteousness was brought near to sinners when the Word became flesh and tabernacled

among men. It is brought near to us now in the Gospel, “for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith” (Rom. 1:17), a righteousness which God imputes to all who believe and then deals with them according to its deserts, and which will constitute their beautiful array when they enter the celestial courts.

“For He [God] hath made Him [Christ] to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be—not put into a capacity of acquiring a righteousness of our own, but—made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Cor. 5:21). Here we have the double imputation of our sins to Christ and of His righteousness to us. Observe that we are not here said to be made righteous, but “righteousness” itself, and not righteousness only, but “the righteousness of God,” which is the utmost that language can reach unto. And in the self-same manner that Christ was “made sin” we are made “righteousness.” Christ knew not actual sin, but upon His mediatorial interposition on our behalf, He was regarded and dealt with as a guilty person. We likewise are destitute of all legal righteousness, yet upon our receiving Christ and believing on His name, we are viewed and treated by the Divine majesty as righteous creatures. Both were by imputation: amazing exchange! So as to utterly exclude the idea that any inherent righteousness is in view, it is expressly said “we are made the righteousness of God *in Him*”: as the sin imputed to Christ is inherent in us, so the righteousness by which we are justified is inherent in Him.

By the Divine plan of redemption the claims of the Law were fully satisfied. There was nothing in all its sacred injunctions which Christ did not perform, and nothing in its awful threatenings which He did not sustain. He fulfilled all its precepts by an unspotted purity of heart and the most perfect integrity of life. He exhausted the whole curse when He hung upon the cross, abandoned by God, a bleeding Victim, for the sins of His people. His obedience conferred higher honour upon the Law than it could possibly have received from an uninterrupted compliance by Adam and all his posterity. The perfections of God which were dishonoured by our rebellion, are glorified in our redemption. In redemption God appears inflexibly just in exacting vengeance, and inconceivably rich in showing mercy. “The sword of justice and the scepter of grace has each its due exercise, each is full expression” (James Hervey). The interests of holiness are also secured for where redemption is received by faith it kindles in the heart an intense hatred of sin and the deepest love and gratitude unto God. AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1944

### WISDOM FOR THE WISE.

“He giveth wisdom unto the wise” (Dan. 2:21). These words may seem almost puzzling to some: if already wise, why should wisdom be given to such? Others may be discouraged: if wisdom be given only to the wise, then I am cut off, for I am an ignoramus, a veritable dunce. If by that you mean (as the world does) uneducated and unsophisticated, that may be quite true—possibly due in part to slackness in failing to improve your opportunities when young. But if you signify, one who is conscious of spiritual dullness, having a felt lack of capacity to enter into Divine things, such a consciousness is a hopeful sign. The word “wise” is used in Scripture in connection with two very different characters: those who are “wise in their own conceits” (Prov. 26:12; Isa. 5:21) and those who are so in the estimation of God. The former are fools in *His* sight; the latter are dunces in their *own* valuation. It is much to be thankful for when we have been made aware of our spiritual ignorance and stupidity, if it induces us to cry with Job, “That which I see not teach Thou me.”

The setting and occasion of our opening text is as follows. Nebuchadnezzar had a dream and though it had gone from him its effects deeply impressed him, and he longed to discover its meaning. Accordingly he summoned before him the magicians and astrologers, demanding that they not only tell him his dream but its interpretation also. The demand was unreasonable, preposterous, nevertheless death was to attend their failure—a sentence which extended also to Daniel and his fellows (Dan. 2:14). Whereupon Daniel went in and requested “that he would give him time,” assuring him that “he would show the king the interpretation” (v. 16). Then Daniel acquainted his companions with the situation, and asked them to join

him in desiring “mercies of the God of heaven concerning this secret” (v. 18). Prayer was their sole recourse; and it was enough. Their petition was answered: “then was the secret revealed unto Daniel in a night vision,” and he “blessed the God of heaven” (v. 19), saying “Blessed be the name of God for ever and ever: for wisdom and might are His...He giveth wisdom unto the wise and knowledge to them that know understanding.”

Limiting ourselves first to the above, we learn *who* are the “wise” and *how* their wisdom is manifested. This incident is indeed a striking one. At the time of its occurrence Daniel was but a young man, and so far as Scripture informs us he had never previously received a prophetic “vision” from God! Yet such was his confidence in the Lord that he tells the king, without any hesitation or qualification, that if allowed time he *would* (not “might” or that he “hoped to”) tell him both his dream and its signification. It should also be duly noted that Daniel and his fellows had no specific promise they could plead before God, no detail in His Word which exactly suited their present emergency, and therefore they fell back upon the general “desiring mercies” from Him. We may also point out that this happened at a time when Israel's spirituality was at an exceedingly low ebb, when the Divine judgments were heavy upon that nation, when many of her sons were in captivity in a heathen land. Nevertheless, Daniel had no fear that God would suffer him to be confounded or put to confusion. In childlike assurance he bowed the knee before Him and obtained that which he sought.

No, my reader, He never puts to confusion those who fully trust Him—He would not be *God* if He did. He has pledged Himself to honour those who honour Him, and as nothing more honours Him than genuine faith in Himself, He always rewards it wherever it be found. The trouble to-day is that the majority of professing Christians are so occupied with natural “means” that direct dealings with God is crowded out. The wisdom of Daniel then appears, first, in his implicit confidence in the Lord's sufficiency: that it was a simple matter for Him to do what had baffled all the “wise men” of Babylon. Second, in his counting upon God's “mercies”: he laid hold of that fact that He is of tender compassion, and this encouraged him in the hour of dire need. Third, in spreading his case before Him, and expecting an answer, as is unmistakably clear from his confident language unto Nebuchadnezzar. It is the faith which *expects* from God that is not disappointed. Such was the faith of Abraham: “I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and *come again* [notwithstanding Isaac's being slain] to you” (Gen. 22:5 and cf. Heb. 11:19). Such was the faith of Elisha (2 Kings 4:3). Such was the faith of Paul (Acts 27:25).

And unto *that* “wise” man God gave more “wisdom” as He “giveth more grace” unto the humble (James 4:5). And this striking and blessed incident has been recorded for our learning: to show us what spiritual wisdom is, how it acts, and what it obtains. Natural knowledge puffs up its possessor, and the more he has the more self-sufficient he deems himself. But it is the very opposite with spiritual wisdom: the more God bestows of that upon His child, the more ignorant and stupid he feels himself to be, and the more dependent upon the Holy Spirit does he become. Then it is that he really values that precious promise “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all liberally and upbraideth not; and it *shall be* given him” (James 1:5). The truly “wise” person will not only greatly prize such a promise, but he will daily *make use* of it, mixing faith therewith, pleading it before the throne of grace, and obtaining answers of peace. As it is “when I am weak [in myself], then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10), so it is when we (spiritually speaking) conduct ourselves as “babes” that God reveals unto us what is hidden from the

worldly wise and prudent (Matt. 11:25).

Let us now widen our scope and take notice of some of the marks of the spiritually “wise.” “O that they were wise, that they understood this, that they would consider their latter end” (Deut. 32:29). The “wise,” then, are those who solemnly ponder their future, who are seriously concerned about where they will spend eternity; and therefore is it their prayer “So teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto Wisdom” (Psa. 90:12). “Rebuke a wise man and he will love thee” (Prov. 9:8)—it is the self-important fool who fails to see that the rebuke was designed for his good. “Give instruction to a wise man and he will be yet wiser” (Prov. 9:9)—treasuring up the instruction and turning it to profit. “A wise man feareth and departeth from evil” (Prov. 14:16)—knowing that as it is dangerous to play with fire, so to dally with temptation. “The way of life is above to the wise” (Prov. 15:24)—his affections set upon things in Heaven is what marks his course.

“The Lord's voice crieth unto the city, and the man of wisdom shall see Thy name” (Micah 6:9), which means that when God is speaking loudly in judgment (as He is to-day) the one endowed with spiritual wisdom will discern the intent of the Divine dispensations and set his own house in order—this is clear from the remainder of the verse: “hear ye the rod, and Who hath appointed it.” Another mark of the “wise” man is that he digged deep and “built his house upon a rock” (Matt. 7:24), which signifies that he is a *doer* of the Word and not a hearer only. The “wise” virgins were those who “took oil in their vessels with their lamps” (Matt. 25:4)—who had grace in their hearts as well as a Christian profession on their lips. “Let no man deceive himself: if any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise” (1 Cor. 3:18)—renounce proud reason and come before God as a little child to be taught by Him. The wise “redeem the time” (Eph. 5:16). “Who is a wise man and endowed with knowledge among you? let him *show* out of a good conversation [deportment] his works with meekness of wisdom” (James 3:13). AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1944

### **IGNORANCE AND KNOWLEDGE.**

“Thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” (Eccl. 11:2). These words enunciate a broad principle which is of general application, intimating our ignorance of future providences. But they also have a more specific meaning, as may be seen from their setting. The context contains an exhortation unto generosity, cultivating acts of benevolence. For the husbandman to cast bread-corn, which he could ill spare, upon a marshy soil, especially if covered by waters; might seem improvident and unwise, but assurance is given him that he shall find it again after many days: the autumn harvest will vindicate his springtide faith and labor. From this a practical application is made: “Give a portion to seven and also to eight.” Do not selfishly hoard up what God has so freely bestowed on you, but distribute a goodly proportion among those who are not so well provided for. Consider the poor and needy and minister to their wants: think not it will all be wasted upon them and come to nought.

But unbelief may object, The outlook is far from being propitious and therefore I should lay up more and more against my own “rainy day.” The miser says, I know not what the future has in store for me, so it is the part of prudence to accumulate whilst I may. No, says our passage, we should reason the very opposite: “*For* thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” Since thou knowest not how calamitous the times may shortly be, then do all possible in the present and you will not be the loser in the future. The instability of human affairs and the possibility that our riches may soon take to themselves wings and fly away, furnishes a sound reason why we should do as much good with them as we can while we have them, and leave the outcome with God. He will not suffer the liberal soul to starve. He who has been wisely

charitable to the indigent is likely to be the recipient of most kindness if an evil day should come upon him; but the miser makes no friends and is left alone when misfortune strikes.

The exhortations of Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2 are by no means to be restricted unto the disbursement of temporal charity: they have also a spiritual import, with a particular application unto the minister of the Gospel. As Faith is needed by the farmer in order to the discharge of his duties, so it is with the evangelical husbandman. He must not be discouraged by the lack of response he meets with and the absence of immediate fruitage to his labours. If he be faithful in casting the Bread of life upon the human “waters” (see Rev. 17:15), particularly “*thy* Bread”—those portions you have personally received from God and which have proved a blessing to your own soul—the sure promise is “thou shalt find it again after many days.” Therefore be not slack or exclusive but “give a portion to seven and also to eight,” for if you prayerfully seek opportunities and carefully observe the openings Providence makes you will be brought into touch with hungry souls. There is many a starved sheep wandering about to-day who will deeply appreciate the ministrations of one of Christ's shepherds.

Not only so, but “for thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth” supplies a further incentive to fidelity. Things are indeed bad enough to-day, but the shrewdest is quite incapable of foreseeing how much worse they may become. When the restraining hand of God is removed, lawlessness abounds with increasing rapidity and intensity. When the sluice-gates are open wickedness floods the whole land, carrying everything before it. When God speaks in judgment to a nation and it refuses to heed His voice His judgments increase in severity, as did His plagues upon Egypt of old. Therefore it is the part of wisdom to redeem the time and make the most of the privileges which are ours to-day. Work while it is called day, for the night cometh when no man can work (John 9:4). Since we have no guarantee about the future “upon the earth” utilise to the full the present.

“Thou knowest not what evil shall be upon the earth.” A generation ago there were men with spiritual discernment who seeing the trend of things then, gave warning that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse.” Those with anointed eyes perceived the blight which had attacked the churches, the decay of vital godliness and family worship, the children growing up without any religious and little moral instructions. They knew that such an awful “falling away” must result in fearful consequences. Even statesmen and unregenerate leaders with natural acumen had dark forebodings of what lay ahead for the world: “Men's hearts failing them for fear and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). But who among the most foreseeing, or even the most pessimistic, would have believed that things should come to the awful pass they now have!—the Spirit largely withdrawn, morality almost disappeared, the lower classes getting things more and more under their control, the whole world in a state of chaos, the vials of God's wrath being poured out on the earth. And the end is not yet, not has the worst by any means been reached. The next generation will reap a still more horrible harvest from what is now being sown.

Black indeed is the outlook for this poor world. But over against this “thou *knowest not* what evil shall be upon the earth,” let us place “Yet surely *I know* that it shall be well with them that fear God” (Eccl. 8:12). Glorious contrast! Blessed assurance! No matter what may yet come “upon the earth” it shall not harm the saints. Though it may overturn their carnal plans and unpleasantly affect their circumstances, yet it shall

not injure their souls. Rather will such temporal afflictions be sanctified unto them, to the drawing of their affections more and more unto things above, thereby causing them to regard more lightly and hold more loosely the things that perish. The plagues which God sent upon Egypt eventuated in the deliverance of His people from the house of bondage. The casting of the Hebrews into Babylon's furnace issued in the burning off of their bonds. However long protracted the Divine judgments upon an apostate Christendom, however much they may yet increase in their severity, yet “we know that all things work together for good to them that love God” (Rom. 8:28).

“Surely I know that *it shall be well* with them that fear God.” This is the knowledge of faith and not of reason. It is the assurance that fills the soul of him who rests with implicit confidence on the Divine promises. God has said to His covenant people “I will not turn away from them to do them good” (Jer. 32:40). He has not in the darkest hours of history. When His wrath burst upon the antediluvians shelter was provided for Noah and his family in the ark. When the long-protracted drought was upon Samaria with its attendant famine, the Lord provided for Elijah by the brook Kerith, and later in the home of the Zarephath widow. When Jezebel determined to stamp out the worship of Jehovah and slew His prophets, one hundred of them were hid in caves and fed with bread and water (1 Kings 8:13). When the Dragon “persecuted the woman” which brought forth the Man child, “a place was provided for her in the wilderness.” And when the Serpent sought to destroy her with a flood of water, “the earth helped” her by opening its mouth and swallowing up the flood (Rev. 12:13-16).

But let due attention be paid to the description here given of those to whom this assurance belongs: “I know that it shall be well with them that *fear God*, which fear before Him.” The added clause renders it most emphatic, that there may be no mistaking their identification. It is not merely those who make a religious profession and associate themselves with His saints, but only the ones who genuinely fear God. To “fear God” is to have a reverential awe of His authority, a filial veneration of His majesty, a heart realisation of His omniscience and omnipresence, a soul subjection to His sceptre. Those who fear God are regulated by His revealed will, have respect to His commandments, are afraid of displeasing Him. Those who fear God will not trifle with Him or deliberately act the part of hypocrites. Concerning them, and them only may it be said, “*Surely* I know it shall be well with them”—well for time and for eternity. AWP

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

May, 1944

### THE PATH OF DUTY.

Occasionally we receive a letter from one of our readers who is confronted with what he regards as a perplexing situation, involving perhaps the stirring of his nest and a change of circumstances, expressing himself as very concerned to know what is "God's will" for him. Our first reaction is to wonder how far the inquirer has been *accustomed* to make conscience of pleasing God. If the inquirer (or the reader) is only exercised about the Divine will when some pressing situation or emergency faces him, it is a bad sign, betraying a sad state of soul and making it doubtful whether such an one has been truly converted. Just as being very religious on the Sabbath but thoroughly worldly through the week is to have "a form of godliness" but "denying the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:5), so for me to be very solicitous about ascertaining and performing the will of God when some crises arises but to have little regard what He has appointed during the general course of my life, is to place a big question-mark against the genuineness of my Christian profession.

The Most High is not at our beck and call, to be made use of only when we are in difficulty. Those who are indifferent to His honour and glory while things are going smoothly and pleasantly for them, are not likely to receive light and help from Him when they feel disposed to make an accommodation of Him in the evil day. Scripture is too plain upon this matter to be misunderstood: "he that turneth away his ear from hearing the Law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Prov. 28:9). Of the hypocrite it is said "will God hear his cry when trouble cometh upon him" (Job 27:9). No, He certainly will not. "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all My

counsel...I also will laugh at your calamity...then shall they call upon Me, but I will not answer...For that they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord...Therefore shall they eat of the fruit of [having] their own way” (Prov. 1:24-31). Compare Micah 3:4; Zechariah 7:13.

But in sharp contrast from the class mentioned above there are those who *have sought* to walk with God and avoid those things which are displeasing to Him, and when some difficulty arises, a parting of the ways suddenly confronts them, an important decision has to be made, they are anxious to know “what is God's will” for them. It appears to us that frequently these souls needlessly perplex themselves by the way in which they frame their question. It has long seemed to us that confusion of thought is betrayed by those who inquire “How am I to ascertain God's mind for me when I have to choose between two alternatives?” Yea, that something more than faulty terminology is involved, is evident from the sequel which immediately follows. So far as our own observation goes the questioner fails to arrive at any clear and decisive answer, being left in a state of doubt and distress, which is neither honouring to God nor comforting for His bewildered child.

Much confusion would be avoided and much uncertainty prevented by asking “Is this, or would that be, *according to the Scriptures?*” for God's “will” or “mind” is made known in His Word. *That* is the Rule, the sure and sufficient Rule we are to walk by, and not inward impressions of His secret will. Perhaps the reader replies, “Yes, I know the will of God is revealed in His Word on all spiritual and eternal matters, but it is about temporal things, the affairs of this life, which I am exercised about and over which I often find myself at an uncertainty.” But that should not be, dear friend. God's Word is given to us for the express purpose of being “a lamp unto our feet and a light unto our path” (Psa. 119:105), that is, our path in and through this world, which, because of its separation and alienation from God, is “a dark place” (2 Peter 1:19). It is wrong, quite unwarrantable, for us to mentally draw a line between spiritual and temporal matters as though they belonged to separate departments of our life.

The present spiritual life of the Christian is lived out in this world, and it is to actuate and regulate him in all his varied concerns: “whether therefore ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). A spiritual life is very much more than elevated contemplations, ecstatic feelings, or being engaged only in distinctly devotional exercises—that is the erroneous view taken of it by those who shut themselves up in monasteries and convents. A spiritual life is not a nebulous and mystical thing, but something intensely practical. A spiritual life is to be maintained and exercised by the Christian in the schoolroom, the home, the workshop, as well as in the House of prayer. It is to dominate him in all his relations, in every association with his fellows, setting before them an example of piety, honesty, unselfishness, helpfulness. In other words, the whole of his conduct is to be ordered by the precepts of Holy Writ, and not by the dictates of self-pleasing, nor by the customs of the world or the whims of “public opinion.”

In His Word God has given us rules which are pertinent to every aspect of our sojourn down here, which are to control every detail of our complex lives, so that there is no need for us to wonder “Is this right”? or “Is that wrong”? We are not left to our own erring judgment nor that of our fellows, for the Lord has supplied us with an unfailing chart and compass to direct us in our voyage to the better Land. The Scriptures not only announce explicit precepts enjoining obedience in detail but they also enunciate broad

principles applicable to every sphere or situation in which Divine providence may place us. Therefore the one question for the saint to be constantly occupied about is, What does Holy Writ require of me? am I acting in accord with *its* teachings? Is my motive in harmony with what it demands? Would I be acting contrary to the Divine Rule if I entered upon such and such a course, adopted this or that fashion or followed a certain policy because my competitors do so or because my employer insists I must. Thereby a multitude of considerations are reduced to a simple and single issue.

What has been pointed out above may be summed up thus: God's "mind" or "will" for me ever lies in my treading *the path of duty*. And that there may be no misunderstanding, let us here define our terms. What is *duty*? The word means "due to," that which I am required to render unto another. The performance of duty is to discharge my obligations Godwards and manwards: loving Him with all my heart and strength and my neighbour as myself. It is to render that service which I am naturally or morally bound to perform unto others. More particularly, it is the execution of my responsibilities in the place which I occupy, whether in the home, the church, or the world. The *ground* of our duty is the Divine command, which is the sole determiner of human responsibility. The *end* of our duty is the glory of God, the pleasing of Him in the task He has allotted. The *present reward* of duty is a good conscience, the peace and satisfaction of mind in knowing I have done what is right. The *path* of duty is the course which Divine providence brings me into and which the Divine precepts have marked out for me.

It is by the providence of God each of us is black or white, male or female, a man of one or of five talents. Yet it is our responsibility to trade with those talents, and if they be put to a good use, more will be entrusted to us. Yet while the providence of God is often an *index*, it is *not the rule* to walk by—for *that* we must turn to the Word. It is in the Scriptures, and there alone, the path of duty is defined for us. Therein it is termed "the path of Thy commandments" (Psa. 119:35), which we need to pray that God will "make us go in," for by nature we are not disposed thereto, being born "like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). Thus the path of duty is that of full obedience to God. It is "The way of holiness" (Isa. 35:8) in contrast from "the course of this world" (Eph. 2:2), which is one of *expediency* or choosing what seems easiest and pleasantest. It is "the way of wisdom" (Prov. 4:11) in distinction for the by-ways of folly. May Divine grace cause us to persevere therein. AWP

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1932

### THE FAITH OF CHRIST

“Without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). Yes, so “great” is this “mystery” that when faith attempts to view it, our eyes are dazzled: only as we contemplate it through the very words of Holy Writ shall we be preserved from the blindness which carnal speculation inevitably imparts. “The Word became flesh.” The second person in the Holy Trinity took upon Him the form of a servant. The eternal Son took holy humanity into union with Himself. Though that humanity was not, in itself, a person, though it never had a separate existence, yet was it endowed with all the elements and qualities of a human personality. Christ was not only God, but man, having a human spirit, and soul, and body. As such, Christ lived the life of a perfect man. Speaking by the Spirit of prophecy He declared, “I have set the Lord always before Me: because He is at My right hand, I shall not be moved” (Psa. 16:8).

In becoming flesh, our blessed Lord took upon Him a *dependent* nature, and therefore did He for thirty-three years live a life of faith upon His heavenly Father. The actings of that faith in all its diversified phases may be clearly seen portrayed to our wondering view in those Psalms, which, beyond all gainsaying, contain the experiences of Christ in the days of His flesh. “There is not a grace or fruit of the Spirit possessed by His people in measure which the Lord did not possess without measure. And these, it must be borne in mind, were active graces, drawn out and called into continual exercise by the same Holy Spirit who had communicated them.

“Faith in all its actings, hope in all its anchorings, love in all its flowings, patience in all its endurings,

humility in all its submittings, prayer in all its supplications, praise in all its adorings, obedience in all its yieldings, holiness in all its flame, and worship in all its fervour—all, all these graces and fruits of the Holy Spirit, may be seen shining forth as with beams of heavenly light in the personal experience of our blessed Lord in those Psalms in which He speaks. They were, as it were, framed for Him by the Holy Spirit before He came into a time state, that they might be not only prophetic of His sufferings for the benefit of His church, but be the spiritual utterance of His own holy soul in the days of His flesh” (J.C. Philpot, 1862).

As the Sponsor and Surety of God's elect, the Lord Jesus entered the place of their responsibility. To be the Kinsman-Redeemer of His people, really and truly “of one” (Heb. 2:11) with the many sons He was to bring to glory: “in all things it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren” (Heb. 2:17), and thus to be brought into that condition wherein He should trust in God, and act in that dependency upon Him which the nature of man, whilst exposed to troubles, does indispensably require. He who was rich, for our sakes became poor. He who had brought into existence the universe by the fiat of His will, now became subject to the commandments of the Father. He who upholdeth all things by the Word of His power, entered the place of complete dependency, and cried to the Strong for strength.

Not only in the Psalms, but in the Prophets too, has the Holy Spirit given us to hear some of the holy breathings of Him who became Man, completely dependent upon God. Most blessedly is this brought before us in Isaiah 50. There we find the Mediator saying, “The Lord God hath given Me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: He wakeneth morning by morning, He wakeneth Mine ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned a way back....The Lord God will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded” (vv. 4, 5, 7). What light this casts upon the lowly place which the Creator of angels had taken! How blessedly it makes known to us His amazing condescension! How perfectly He conducted Himself as the Father's Servant (Isa. 42:1). Well could He say, “Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29).

1. From the very commencement of His earthly life, the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Marvelously is this revealed to us in the 22nd Psalm. There we behold the Saviour in the midst of His dying agonies: doubtless tempted by Satan to give way to unbelief and despair—for it was there he was permitted to fully vent his enmity against the woman's seed (Gen. 3:15, Luke 22:53); yet vain were the Enemy's attacks. There we hear our blessed Redeemer declaring, “But thou art He that took Me out of the womb: Thou didst make Me hope when I was upon My mother's breasts. I was cast upon Thee from the womb: Thou art My God from My mother's belly” (vv. 9, 10). How this brings out His uniqueness! In His faith, as in everything else, He has the “pre-eminence” (Col. 1:18). It was not only in manhood, or childhood, but from very earliest infancy, that the Man Christ Jesus drew His support from the Triune God.

2. Throughout His life the Lord Jesus lived by faith. Many are the proofs of this, but we can here barely mention a few of them. His prayer-life exemplifies the fact. He was engaged in prayer while being baptized (Luke 3:21). He “continued all night in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12) before selecting the twelve Apostles. It was “as He prayed” that “the fashion of His countenance was altered” (Luke 9:29), and He was transfigured on the holy mount. His prayers expressed His dependence upon and felt need of the

Father. His victory over Satan illustrated the same fact. “By the Word of Thy lips I have kept Me from the paths of the Destroyer” He declared; and then added, “Hold up My goings in Thy paths” (Psa. 17:4, 5). “He ever acted in filial dependence upon the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father's fullness” (A. Saphir).

Christ was never actuated by what is called “common sense,” influenced by public opinion, or governed by worldly policy and prudence; instead, He was always beholding Him who is invisible, walking with God, and doing His will: “I am not alone....He that sent Me is with Me” (John 8:16, 29). The Captain of our salvation was exposed to great difficulties, anxiety of mind, dangers and troubles—typed out by the great sufferings of David before he came to the kingdom. But in all His perplexities the Lord Jesus ever betook Himself unto the protection of God: “Preserve Me, O God: for in Thee do I put My trust” (Psa. 16:1)—such was His plea. “As the living Father hath sent Me and I *live by* the Father, so he that eateth Me, even he shall live by Me” (John 6:57). “When He suffered, He threatened not, but (by faith) committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23).

3. On the Cross the suffering Saviour's faith was active. Wondrously is this brought out in Isaiah 50:8, 9, “He is near that justifieth Me....Behold, the Lord God will help Me; who is he that shall condemn Me?” The ineffably Holy One had been made the Sinbearer. Jehovah had laid on Christ the iniquity of all His people (Isa. 53:6). Though personally sinless, all the sins of God's elect were imputed to Christ, “Who His own self bare our sins in His own body to the tree” (1 Peter 2:24). Yet even while enduring the curse, and the wrath of God was hard upon Him, our Surety had implicit faith that He would be exonerated—“He is near that *justifieth* Me.”

4. In death itself the Saviour fully trusted God. His last act was one of faith: “Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit” (Luke 23:46). “My flesh shall rest in hope (literally “dwells in confident sureness”), for Thou wilt not leave My soul in Hades, neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou *wilt* show Me the path of life (resurrection life): in Thy presence is fullness of joy, at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psa 16:9-11).

Perhaps the fear of lowering the character of our blessed Lord has restrained many from writing on this precious theme; but none should be afraid to go as far as Scripture goes. As we have seen, Holy Writ depicts the life of Christ as giving us the only perfect and all-sided embodiment of faith. Nor was His faith a secret or hidden thing: He made open profession of it—His enemies acknowledged “He *trusted in God*” (Matt 27:43). O for more conformity to His image. Christ is not only the Christian's righteousness and peace, but as well, the model and strength of his life.—A.W.P.

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October, 1932

### **FEEBLE FAITH**

“And the apostles said unto the Lord, increase our faith” (Luke 18:5).

Did the Apostles need to pray? Then well may I. Oh! Thou great Author and Finisher of our faith! I would look up unto Thee, with thankfulness, that Thou hast granted even the smallest portion of faith to so unworthy a creature as I am. Surely, my soul, it is as great a miracle of grace that my God and Saviour should have kindled belief in thy stony heart, amidst all the surrounding obstructions of sin and Satan which lay there, as when miraculous fire from heaven, in answer to the prophet's prayer, came down and consumed the wetted sacrifice. I praise Thee, my God and King, this day, in the recollection of this unspeakable, unmerited mercy. And though this faith in my heart still be but as a grain of mustard seed; though it be but as a spark in the ocean; though it be but as a drop of dew, in comparison of the river; yet, blessed, precious Jesus! still this is faith, and it is Thy gift. And is it not a token of Thy favour? Is it not an earnest of the Holy Spirit, and a pledge of the promised inheritance? Babes in faith, as well as strong in the Lord, are equally Thine: for it is said that, “as many as were ordained to eternal life believed” (Acts 13:48); “and to as many as believed, Thou gavest power to become the sons of God.” So it is by Thyself, blessed Redeemer, and not by the strength or weakness of the faith of Thy people, their justification before God the Father is secured. Precious is the Scripture which tells us, that by Thee all that believe, whether great faith or little faith—”all that believe are justified from all things” (Acts 13:39).

But, my soul, while the consciousness of thy possessing the smallest evidences of faith in thy Beloved,

gives thee joy unspeakable and full of glory, dost thou not blush to think what ungrateful returns thou art making to thy Redeemer in the littleness of thy faith in such a God and Saviour? Whence is it that thine affections are so warm in a thousand lesser things, and so cold toward Christ? Whence that His Holy Word thou so often hearest as though thou heardest not? Whence the ordinances of Jesus' house, the promises of His Scriptures, the visits of His grace; whence these pass again and again before thee, and thou remainest so cold and lifeless in thy affections? Whence that the temptations of Satan, the corruptions of thine heart, the allurements of the world, gain any influence upon thee? Whence that thou art so anxious about things that perish; about anything, about nothing, deserving to be called interesting; whence so seldom at the court of the Heavenly King, where thou oughtest to be found daily, hourly, waiting; and whence under trials, or the want of answers at a mercy-seat, fretful, impatient, and misgiving—whence all these, and numberless other evils, but from the weakness and littleness of thy love to Christ, and thy trust in Christ, and thy dependence upon Christ, and thy communion with Christ? All, all arise out of this one sad cause, my soul, thine unbelief. Jesus, Master, look upon me, put the cry with earnestness within my heart, that I may unceasingly, with the Apostle's prayer, be sending forth this as the first and greatest petition of my whole soul—"Lord, increase my faith." (Rob. Hawker, 1825)

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

November, 1932

### CONVICTION OF SIN

Conviction is an embryo of the new creature: if it come to a perfect birth, it brings forth salvation to your souls; if it fails, you are finally lost. It is of infinite moment, therefore, to everyone, to be tender of those convictions of conscience. It is true that conviction and conversion are two things: there may be conviction without conversion, though there cannot be conversion without conviction. The blossoms on the trees in the spring of the year cannot properly be called fruit, but are rather the rudiments of fruit, or something in order to fruit. If they open kindly and knit or set firmly, proper fruit follows them; but if blight or a frosty morning kill them, no fruit is to be expected. Thus it is here. Great care, therefore, ought to be taken about the preservation and success of convictions, both by the soul itself that is under them, and by all others who are concerned about them.

1. What care the soul itself should have on whom convictions are wrought. Beware, friends, how you quench them or hinder their operations, lest you hinder as much as in you lies, the formation of Christ in your souls. The life of your souls is bound up in the life of your convictions. I know it is hard for men to dwell with their own convictions: guilt and wrath are sad subjects for men's thoughts to dwell upon; but it is far better to dwell with the thoughts of sin and wrath here, than to lie under them in Hell forever. You may be freed from your convictions and your salvation together. Be not too eager for peace—a good trouble is better than a false peace. And on the other hand, beware that your convictions turn not into discouragements to faith: this will cross the proper intention of them; they are Christ's knockings for entrance, and were never intended to be bars or stumblingblocks, but steps in your way to Christ.

2. Let all that are concerned about convicted souls beware what counsels they give and what rules they prescribe, lest you destroy all in the bud. There are two errors too commonly committed: one is *excess*, persuading souls under trouble of conscience that there is no coming to Christ for them unless they are so and so prepared, humbled just to such a degree: this is dangerous counsel; it overheats the troubled conscience, and keeps the soul from its proper present duty and remedy. I am sure Paul and Silas took no such course with the convicted jailer (Acts 16:31), nor Peter with the three thousand wounded consciences (Acts 2:38). Nor do I find where God has stated the time and degree of spiritual troubles, so that there must be no approaches to Christ in the way of faith, until they have suffered them so long and to such a height. If they have embittered sin to the soul, and made it see the necessity of a Saviour, it cannot move too soon after Christ in the way of faith. Let no man set bounds where God sets none.

There is another error committed in *defect*: when promises and comfort are applied before the nature of faith is known, or one act of reliance put forth towards Christ. These hasty comforts come to nothing; they will not, they cannot stand. It is a dangerous thing to apply Gospel cordials, and pour out the precious ointments of the promises upon those who were never heart-sick for sin—address to such persons upon every slight trouble, which is but as an early dew, the peculiar consolations of penitent and believing souls. How many such empirics (quacks) are there in every place! Such as the prophet Jeremiah complains of, “They have healed also the hurt of My people slightly, saying Peace; when there is no peace” (6:14). Remember, that the foundation is now laying for eternity, and that this is the time of deep consideration; men must ponder the terms and count the cost, and deliberately accept and close this with Christ, before the consolations of the promises can properly be administered to them.

What a blessing is a rousing and faithful ministry among a people! By such a ministry Christ knocks powerfully, this is one of the greatest blessings God can bestow upon a people, when He sends among them powerful and judicious preachers of the Gospel, under whose ministry their conscience cannot sleep quietly. These are the instruments by which Christ knocks at men's hearts; and as for those who sew pillows for drowsy sinners, to sleep quietly upon (Eze. 3:8), the Lord owns them not as His: “Thy prophets have seen vain and foolish things for thee, and they have not discovered (exposed) thine iniquity” (Lam. 2:14). It is true that those ministers that give men no rest and quietness in their sins, must expect but little rest and quietness themselves. What is it for ministers to preach home to the consciences of others, but to pull down the rage of the world upon their own heads? But certainly you will have cause to bless God through eternity, for casting your lot under such a ministry; and the Lord accounts such a mercy sufficient to recompense any outward affliction that may lie heavy upon you.

3. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom. 1:18). Then let me exhort and persuade you by all the regard and love you have for your souls, by all the fears you have of incensed wrath of the great and terrible God, that you forthwith set your convictions at liberty, and loose all the Lord's prisoners that lie bound within you: “Because there is wrath, beware lest He take thee away with His stroke” (Job 36:18). O stifle the voice of conscience no more, slight not the softest whisper or least intimation of conscience; reverence and obey its voice.

1. Till you set free your convictions Satan will not let you go: he binds you, while you bind them. Here is the command of God and the command of Satan in competition. Let My truths go free, which thou holdest in unrighteousness, says Jehovah; bind and suppress them, says Satan, or they will deprive thee of the liberty and pleasures of thy life. While thou slightest the voice of God and conscience, dost thou not avowedly declare thyself the bondsman of Satan? “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom you obey?” (Rom. 6:16). Dare not to take one step further in the way of known sin, says conscience; continue not at thy peril in such a dangerous state, after I have so clearly convinced and warned thee of it. Fear not, says Satan, if it be ill with thee, it will be with millions. Now, I say, thy obedience to Satan's commands declares thee, all this while, to be a poor enslaved captive to him, acted on and carried according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit now worketh in the children of disobedience.

2. Until you obey your convictions, you are confederates with Satan in a desperate plot against your own souls; you join with Christ's great and avowed enemy to dishonour Him. Two things make you confederates with Satan against your own souls. First, your *consent* to this project for your damnation; for so your own conscience out of Scripture informs you it is: consent makes you a party. Second, your *concealment* of this plot brings you in as a party with him. Confess thy sin and bewail it, says conscience: not so, says pride and shame; how shall I look men in the face if I do so? Do not you, in all this, believe Satan and make God a liar? Do not you act as men who hate their own souls and love death? “But he that sinneth against Me wrongeth his own soul: all they that hate Me love death” (Prov. 8:36). O it is a dreadful thing for men to be accessory to their own eternal ruin, and that after fair warning and notice given them by their own conscience. Satan, be his power what it will, cannot destroy you without your own consent.

3. While you go on stifling convictions and turning away your ears from calls to righteousness, you cannot be pardoned; you are yet in your sins, and the guilt of them lies at your door. You see what the terms of remission are: “Let the wicked forsake his ways, and the unrighteous man his thoughts, and let him return unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). And again, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper; but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy” (Prov. 28:13). You see by these, and many more plain Scripture testimonies, that there can be no hope of remission, while you go on in the path of rebellion, concealing, yea, and persisting in known wickedness. There is a necessary and inseparable connection between repentance and remission: “Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins” (Acts 5:31); “That repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name” (Luke 24:47).

4. You can never have peace of conscience while you keep convictions prisoners. A man's conscience is his best friend or his worst enemy; thence are the sweetest comforts, and thence are the bitterest sorrows. It is a dreadful thing for a man to lie with a cold sweating horror upon his panting bosom. And this, or which is worse, obduracy and stupidity must be the case of them who hold the truth in unrighteousness. As Israel could have no peace till Achan was destroyed, so thou shalt have no peace while thy sin is covered and hid. Deliver up thyself, if thou lovest peace, into the hand of thy own convictions, and then thou art in the true way to peace.

Do not some of you stand convicted by your own consciences this day, that your hearts and practices are vastly different from those of the true people of God among whom you live, and whose character you read in Scripture? Do not your consciences tell you, that you never took the pains for your salvation which you see them take; that there are some in your families, nay, possibly in your bosoms, who are serious and holy while you are vain and earthly—who are on their knees wrestling with God, while you are about the things of the world? And does not your conscience sometimes whisper thus into thine ear: Soul, thou art not right, something is wanting, to make thee a Christian. If it be so, let me advise thee to hearken diligently to that voice of conscience; do not venture to the judgment seat of God in such a case. Ponder that verse, “For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him” (Matt. 21:32). Let the disparity your conscience shows you between your own course and that of others, awaken you to more diligence and seriousness about your own salvation. How canst thou come from thy vain recreations, and find a wife or child in prayer, and thy conscience not smite thee? It may be they have been mourning for thy sins, whilst thou hast been committing them.

*Directions.* 1. Fail not to put every conviction into speedy execution. Do not delay; it is a critical hour, and delays are exceedingly hazardous. Convictions are fixed and secured in men's souls four ways. First, by deep and serious consideration: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies” (Psa. 119:59). Second, by earnest prayer: thus Saul, after his first convictions, fell on his knees: “Behold, he prayeth” (Acts 9:11). The breath of prayer forments and nourishes the sparks of conviction, that they be not extinct. Third, by diligent attendance on the Word. The Word begets conviction, and the Word can, through God's blessing, preserve it. Fourth, by performing, without delay, the duty thou are commanded of: “For if any be a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straight-way forgetteth what manner of man he was” (James 1:23, 24). Take the sense thus: a man looks into the glass in the morning, and perhaps he sees a spot on his face, or a disorder in his hair or clothes, and thinks within himself, I will rectify it; but being gone from the place, one thing or other diverts his mind, he forgets what he saw, and goes all the day with a spot on his face, never thinking of it more. O brethren, delays are dangerous, sin is deceitful (Heb. 3:13), Satan is subtle (2 Cor. 11:3), and in this way he gains his point. This motto may be written on the tomb of most that perish, “Herein lies one that was destroyed by delays.”

Your life is uncertain, so are the strivings of the Spirit. Besides there is a mighty advantage in the first impulse of the soul. When thy heart is once up in warm affections and resolutions, the work may be easily done, see 2 Chronicles 29:36, for what advantage there is in a present warm frame. Besides, the nature of these things is too serious and weighty to be postponed and delayed. You cannot get out of the danger of Hell, or into Christ, too soon. Moreover, every repetition of sin after conviction greatly aggravates it. For it is in sinning as in numbering: if the first be one, the second is ten, the third a hundred. You can never have a fitter season than the present.

2. If you would be clear from this great wickedness of holding the truth in unrighteousness, see that you reverence the voice and authority of your conscience, and resolve with Job, “My heart shall not reproach me so long as I live” (27:6). There are two considerations fitted to beget reverence to the voice of conscience. (a) Conscience obeyed and kept pure and inviolate is thy best friend on earth. “For our

rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience” (2 Cor. 1:12). What comforted Hezekiah on his supposed deathbed, but the testimony his conscience gave of his integrity?—”I beseech Thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a perfect heart, and have done good in Thy sight” (2 Kings 20:3). Solomon says, “The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways, and a good man shall be satisfied from himself” (Prov. 14:14). Mark the opposition: conscience gives the backslider a heart full of sorrow, while the heart of the upright man is full of peace. He is satisfied from himself; that is, from his own conscience, which though it be not the original spring, yet is the conduct at which he drinks peace, joy, and satisfaction.

(b) Conscience wounded and abused will be our worst enemy: “The spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?” (Prov. 18:14). Could Judas bear it? What is the torment of Hell, but the worm that dies not; and what is the worm, but the remorse of conscience?—”Where their worm dieth not, and (in addition A.W.P.) the fire is not quenched” (Mark 9:44). The primitive Christians would rather be cast to the lions than into the power of an enraged conscience. O if men did but fear and reverence their own consciences; if they exercised themselves to have always a conscience void of offence, as Paul did, (Acts 24:16), then would they be clear of this great sin of holding the truth in unrighteousness.

3. If you would escape the guilt and danger of holding God's truth in unrighteousness, keep your hearts under the awful sense of the Day of Judgment, when every secret thing will be brought to light, and conscience like a register-book will be opened and examined. The due consideration of that Day gives the conscience a sevenfold defense against sin. First, it incites every man to get real, solid grace, and not rest in an empty profession; and this secures us from formal hypocrisy, that we should not be found foolish virgins (Matt. 25:3). Second, it excites us to the diligent improvement of our talents, that we be not found slothful servants, neglecting any duty to which God and conscience calls us (Matt. 25:21). Third, it confirms and establishes us in the ways of God, that we would not conscience by apostasy (1 John 2:28). Fourth, it is a loud call to every man to repentance, and not to lie stupid and senseless under guilt (Acts 17:30, 31). Fifth, it is a powerful antidote against formality in religion, the general and dangerous disease of professors (Matt. 7:22, 23). Sixth, it excites holy fear and watchfulness in the whole course of life (1 Peter 1:17). Seventh, it puts us not only on our watch, but on our knees in fervent prayer (1 Peter 4:7).—John Flavel, 1689.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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### THE OBEDIENCE OF CHRIST

Our desire is to contemplate here, by the help of the Holy Spirit, that lovely perfection of the Lord Jesus which was the very life and beauty of His mediatorial holiness. His obedience was the absolute conformity of His entire spirit and soul to the will and mind of His Father; His ready and cheerful performance of every duty and everything which God commanded Him. This obedience He performed perfectly, amid the greatest and sorest trials, with infinite respect unto Him whose “Servant” (Isa. 42:1) He had become. The laws which He obeyed were, first, those to which He was subject considered simply as man (Gal. 4:4), namely, the Ten Commandments or moral law. Second, those to which He was subject considered as Son of David (Matt. 1:1), namely, the ceremonial law of Israel. Third, those to which He was subject as Mediator, namely, fulfilling the commandments which He had received from the Father to preach the Gospel, perform miracles, call disciples, and die upon the Cross.

The closer the four Gospels be read in the light of our present subject, the more will it be seen that obedience to the Father was Christ's supreme mission on earth. As He Himself declared, “My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me” (John 4:34); and again, “For I came down from Heaven not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me” (John 6:38). Familiar as are these verses to many Christians, few have seen the *fullness* of His obedience, or perceived that *every act* of Christ during the thirty-three years He tabernacled among men was distinctly and designedly an act of submission unto God. Limited space will not allow us to attempt much more than an outline of this blessed fact and truth as it was realized in the life of Him who always did those things which pleased the Father (John 8:29).

Christ's birth was an act of obedience. This will be the more evident if we recognize that every prophecy of God concerning His Son was for Christ a command and the fulfillment of each prophecy was a designed act of obedience on His part. Hence, in Matthew 1:20-23 we find an angel announcing to Joseph, "Thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus: for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son." Thus, in subjection to His Father's decree the Lord of glory condescended to be made of a woman. Compare Hebrews 10:5-9.

"Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbade Him, saying, I have need to be baptized of Thee, and comest Thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now; for thus it becometh us to *fulfill all righteousness*" (Matt. 3:13-15). Here it is distinctly said that Christ's baptism had to do with the fulfilling of "righteousness" or right doing, measuring up to the required standard. His words to John signified, "Neither you or I can do the will of the Father except I submit to baptism, and you baptize Me."

The perfect obedience of Christ appears next in His resistance to Satan's temptations. There we see the great Enemy seeking to turn aside the Saviour from the path of complete surrender to God's will; but in vain. Christ unhesitatingly refused to perform the Devil's bidding, meeting each assault with an "It is written," which was the same as though He had said, "I decline to go contrary to the Divine precepts, I refuse to disobey My Father." Possibly Matthew 4:1-10 will appear in a newer or clearer light if the reader turns to and sees in its contents a studied effort on the part of the Serpent to induce the last Adam unto an act of disobedience, and His steadfast refusal to take one step contrary to the revealed will of God.

The perfect servant of God chose His place of labour in obedience to God's revealed will. "Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, He departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-coast in the borders of Zabulon and Naphtali: *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet" (Matt. 4:12-14). It was not the force of circumstances which drove the Lord Jesus to select Capernaum as His ministerial headquarters, nor was it of personal inclination; that town had been singled out by God long before His Son came to earth, and it was in subordination to the Divine will that He went there. How this shows us that Christ made obedience unto God the one great business of His life!

His miracles of mercy were wrought in obedience to the Father's revealed will. "When the even was come, they brought unto Him many that were possessed with demons; and He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick; *that it might be fulfilled* which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities and bare our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:16, 17). How striking is the particular aspect of truth here made known to us! Christ was tender, sympathetic, and full of compassion, yet the first and deepest motive which moved Him to heal the sick was that the will of God might be done. Beautifully does this come out in John 11. Though Martha and Mary had sent a message unto Christ that their brother was sick, He responded not to their appeal till the Father's hour arrived: see verses 4-6.

His saving of sinners was in order to render obedience unto God. “All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out; *for* I came down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me.” What a view does this present to us of the redemptive work of Christ! How it magnifies His blessed submission unto the One who had sent Him into this world!

The Redeemer's preservation of His people is in obedience to the Father. “And this is the Father's will which hath sent Me, 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). Thus, the security of the saint depends not only upon the Saviour's love unto His own, or His all-mighty power, but is as well His act of subjection to God.

His very death was itself an act of submission to the Father, for He “became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. 2:8). As He Himself declared concerning His life, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. This *commandment* have I received of My Father” (John 10:18). Thus, there were no limits to His obedience, no reserve in His subjection to the Father's will, but complete and perfect compliance with the same throughout the whole of His earthly life. How blessed it is to perceive that through and by His Son's obedience God has been more honoured upon earth than He has been dishonoured by all the disobedience of all the sons of Adam!

In seeking to make an application of that which has been before us, let us point out, first, that this perfect obedience of Christ is reckoned to the account of all and each of His people, being that “righteousness” which is imputed by God to them; as it is written, “For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of One shall many be made (legally constituted) righteous” (Rom. 5:19). Second, Christ has left us an example that we should follow His steps: “he that saith he abideth in Him ought himself so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6). Third, obedience is to be the one aim and mission of the Christian. To us Christ says, “If ye love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15); and again, “If ye keep My commandments, ye shall abide in My love, even as I have kept My Father's commandments, and abide in His love” (John 15:10). A.W.P.

N.B. For much of the above we are indebted to an article by J.W. Gillon, which appeared in the “Western Recorder” of November 15, 1917.

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### PRAYER

The Spirit of God exhorts the saints at least three times definitely in the New Testament to pray. “Men ought always to pray, and not to faint” (Luke 18:1); “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thess. 5:17); “I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1 Tim. 2:8). This means no more and no less than that the life of God's people should be a life of continual prayer. Prayer is the most mighty power in the Christian life under every circumstance, and the records of Scripture and history tell us that the meekest and strongest Christian, is the praying Christian. Prayer is not a matter of one or three times a day, but of every moment of the day, and every moment of a sleepless night. If we realized that the child of God in prayer is in close communion with God, with the Almighty Himself, then it will be clear to every one of us what a mighty power and weapon prayer is. If we are in close communion with God, we are in our appointed place; God has the place in our hearts which He rightly owns, and we please Him. Prayer means: to be in the dust before a thrice holy God on His throne, and in fear and holy reverence speaking with Him, pleading with Him, begging from Him, through the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:26), on the righteous claim which we have through the precious blood of Him, the only-begotten Son, who gave us access into the Holiest (Heb. 10:19, 20). It is prayer when we approach God to unburden our hearts, plead His promises, and ask for the things we need.

Now it is a sad fact that many of the prayers (so called) from God's children do not go higher than the ceiling of the room where they are uttered, for the simple reason that many prayers are no prayers at all—especially when uttered in company, at prayer-meetings. How many of these prayers are only

workings of the flesh, to make a fair show before the fellow saints!—to express Scriptural knowledge, to rebuke (or worse, sneer at) a fellow-saint; or dictate to God what He should do or not do. No lowliness of heart, no meekness of the spirit, but a proud and haughty attitude, often prevails in such meetings. The Holy Spirit is grieved and insulted, and quenched in the babes of Christ. An aged saint told me some years ago: Brother, if you want to find out Christians, go to the prayer-meetings!

As for private prayer, prayer in the closet, let every one of us examine himself how we in the past did approach God, and how many things we pleaded and asked whereby we, instead of honouring the Holy One, insulted Him. Well may we cry: “Lord teach us *to pray*” (Luke 11:1). Holy Writ teaches us that we must pray in the Holy Spirit (Jude 20): “praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit” (Eph. 6:18). Although every child of God is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, he is not always *in* the Spirit; for many times the Holy Spirit is grieved through sin. How we need, beloved brethren and sisters, the exhortation in Ephesians 4:30-32: “And grieve not the Holy Spirit, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption. Let all bitterness and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice, and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven you.” I have been in homes and in prayer-meetings where people were reading the newspaper and talking the gossip of the day, till the so-called leader suggested, Brethren, let us begin to pray. Awful!

When we have grieved the Spirit, it is first of all needful to confess and forsake our sins before God (Prov. 28:13). Then we need to ask the Holy Spirit for guidance (Rom. 8:26, 27), that we should not use vain and idle words, which only condemn us and insult God. It is many times regarded as very spiritual to hear a long prayer from a man. But the humble and true saint knows that, when we are really in the Spirit before a holy God on our knees, that as a rule we have not many words to use, although the heart is full; and also that, when we pray in the flesh, we have so many words that we hardly know how to stop. It will be good for every one of us to be reminded of the words from our Lord Jesus Christ: “When ye pray, use not vain repetitions as the heathen do . . . be not ye therefore like unto them” (Matt. 6:7, 8). Prayer as well as worship must be in Spirit and in Truth. There must be a spiritual realization that we are before a thrice holy God; there must be a holy fear whereby we know that we cannot deceive God. We must be true, honest, and searching ourselves in the Truth; because we are liable to deceive ourselves and stand before God as liars. Prayer is a very solemn thing, beloved fellow-heirs.

It is good for us to observe that which is found in what is called the “Lord's Prayer” in Matthew 6. This prayer gives us an example for shortness, and begins and ends with worship. In verse 9 God is addressed as “Father,” and given honour and reverence. In verse 13 the prayer closes with honouring Him in His “kingdom, power and glory.” If we approach God in prayer while in agony of bodily pain, or in agony of soul; in sorrow of bereavement, in pleading for our brethren with tears, or in need of temporal things or having a heart full of joy for the great things the Lord has done for us:—we must approach Him in the Spirit, in lowliness and in humiliation; and there must be *faith*. For “without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a Rewarder of them that diligently seek Him” (Heb. 11:6). Volumes could be written on the subject of prayer, but I believe for the child of God there are three points which he should specially take to heart for effective and prevailing prayer, in which God is honoured. First, what it means to pray in the name of Christ. Second, the importance of

pleading the promises. Third, what are the things we need most to pray for?

Before our Lord was crucified and ascended to the Father, the people of God, even His disciples, did not pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. But in the last conversation with the disciples, the Lord knowing that His hour was come, that He should depart out of the world unto the Father, told them He would send the Spirit of truth (the Comforter, the Holy Spirit) and that whatsoever they should ask in His name, that would He do, that the Father might be glorified in the Son (John 14:13). And a little later He said, “Hitherto have ye asked nothing in My name: ask and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full” (John 16:24). All this was to be after His departure, when the Holy Spirit should dwell in them, and teach them through the fully revealed Word (1 John 2:27; John 17:17). It will be a matter of simple truth and need for the child of God when he bows down in prayer, that he begins by honouring God the Father. But we cannot honour God, when we pass by the Son! For it is written, “That all men should honour the Son, even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent Him” (John 5:23). In other words, we have in prayer to acknowledge and honour the Son, otherwise we do not honour God, and He will not hear our prayer. Further: how do we know God as our Father? Through the Son: “Neither knoweth any man the Father save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him” (Matt. 11:27).

Multitudes know God, but not God the Father, because they do not know the Son. God's elect were “predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will . . . In whom (that is Jesus Christ) we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:5, 7). We are redeemed by the blood of Christ, by which we receive the adoption of sons; and by the Spirit of adoption we cry, “Abba, Father” (Rom. 8:15). Because we have received the spirit of a child, we know the Father. Moreover, Christ Jesus is appointed by God our High Priest: “who hath entered into Heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us” (Heb. 9:24); seeing then that we have a great High Priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, who is touched with the feeling of our infirmities, because He was in all parts tempted like we are (yet in Him was no sin, He was spotless, undefiled);—”let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14-16). He is our Advocate with the Father, as Jesus Christ the righteous (1 John 2:1). If we want to approach God in prayer, we have to do this through the Son, in the name of the Son: “no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6). He is “*the door*” for the sheep.

It is very important in prayer to plead the promises of God. This will be plain when we read that “all the promises of God in Him (in Christ) are yea, and in Him Amen, unto the glory of God by us (2 Cor. 1:20). Exceeding great and precious are these promises which are given unto us by God's Divine power, being added to the all things which pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of Him that hath called us to glory and virtue: so that by these promises “ye might be partakers of the Divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:3, 4). It is by experimentally enjoying these promises that we indeed, in a practical way, become partakers of the Divine nature; and this cannot be before we have also in a practical way escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. This will make it plain that conditions of responsibility are bound up with the promises of God, and that these conditions must be fulfilled by us in purpose of heart before we can plead, receive, and enjoy the promises.

It is no use to plead a promise from God while we willfully and purposely walk against the will of God. For instance, in 2 Corinthians 7:1 we read, “Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from a filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit perfecting holiness in the fear of God.” It must be clear to every unbiased mind that here are conditions laid down if we want to enjoy experimentally these promises. And what are “*these* promises” here spoken of? See 2 Corinthians 6:18, “And I will be Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and My daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” The condition for being able to enjoy experimentally these promises is: Cleanse ourselves, thus perfecting holiness in the fear of God; and this means practical separation from all that is not of God (see 2 Cor. 6:14 to 17).

The promise of the Lord's return and redemption of the body is for them who fulfill the condition laid down in Hebrews 9:28: “*unto them that look for Him* shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation.” We are His friends if we do whatsoever He commands us (John 15:14). His promise is: He will give, and open to us; but we must ask and knock; (Matt. 7:7, 8). It is rather marvelous to hear true children of God pleading promises from God without taking heed to the conditions of responsibility which are bound up with every promise. The promise for the unregenerated man not to perish and have everlasting life is: that he must “believe” (John 3:15, 16). Who hath everlasting life? He that believeth on the Son (John 3:36). It is only when the sinner believes, that he experimentally enjoys the promise of everlasting life. And as for believers, they who are God's children, He forgiveth our sins and cleanseth us from all unrighteousness *if* we confess our sins (1 John 1:9). Who shall have mercy? He who confesseth and forsaketh his sins (Prov. 28:13). The promise of being blessed is given repeatedly in Holy Writ. But who will be “blessed”? He that considereth the poor (Psa. 41:1); he that is poor in spirit; the meek, the merciful, the pure in heart, etc. (see Matt. 5:3 to 11). He will keep him in perfect peace. Whom? “Whose mind is stayed on Thee, because he trusteth in Thee” (Isa. 26:3). The Lord said to Abram, “I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee”; but the condition was, “Get thee out” (Gen. 12:1, 2). The Lord's promise is, that He will honour thee, *if* thou honourest Him (1 Sam. 2:30).

It is very needful for God's people to study the promises of God that we may know *what* to ask in prayer. Many things are asked in prayer which God never promised, and many promises are asked while we are totally ignorant of the claims of God bound up with them. One of the conditions in prayer is, that we should ask according to God's will; and when we do so, we have His promise that “He heareth us” (1 John 5:14). We must not ask the fulfilling of any promise to consume it on our own lusts, but always ask it to the glory of God. And it is needful that we should have fulfilled in purpose and determination of heart, the conditions, the responsibility, which is bound up with the promise we ask for.

And “According to your *faith* be unto you” (Matt. 9:29). “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; and nothing shall be impossible unto you” (Matt. 17:20). The promises of God are great, “Exceeding great,” and never too great that we could not ask for, or God would not give. But at the same time we have to remember that conditions of our responsibility are inseparably bound up with them. God does not give like a foolish father to a spoiled child. O, no, Brethren, God is holy, and never will He sanction sin. He may show mercy to us, and He does—otherwise all of us would be consumed; but His command is, “Be ye clean that bear the vessels of the Lord” (Isa. 52:11).

*What are the things* we most need to pray for in these days of corruption, selfishness, and exaltation of man? What should we specially pray for in these last days, when *individual* faithfulness to God alone has value? First of all let me take it for granted that God is the Creator and Ruler of the Universe; that He is the Giver of all good and perfect things; that we are only poor worms, at His entire mercy, and consequently we have to ask for everything—bread and water, as well as desired fellowship with our brethren and sisters; for “in Him we live and move and have our being” (Acts 17:28). But the child of God, as belonging to the kingdom of His dear Son (Col. 1:13), and being still in the world, although he belongs not to it (John 17:16), is commanded to be holy as God is holy (1 Peter 1:16). And as such, there are special things he needs to pray for. 1. A holy life, which in a practical way means obeying the commands of our Lord Jesus Christ—”Follow Me.” And if we truly are desirous of following Him, we need first of all, meekness and lowliness in heart and spirit. Thus should we pray that God will cause us daily, hourly, momentarily, to come to Christ and take His yoke upon us and learn of Him (Matt. 11:29).

2. As our heart is still prone to be deceitful and desperately wicked, so that we do not know what is in it, we need to pray, “Search me O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23). 3. As each of us is very ignorant of the statutes of the Lord, and especially of the way to walk in them, we need to pray “Teach me O Lord, the way of Thy statutes” (Psa. 119:33). 4. As we all know, or ought to know, the commandments given to us in Holy Writ, but fail to keep them as the Lord bids, we have to pray, “Make me to go in the path of Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:35). 5. God's children read His Word, but show repeatedly by their actions that they do not really believe it. The reason of which is that God's Word is not established, or rooted in their hearts. Therefore we have to pray, “establish Thy Word unto Thy servant” (Psa. 119:38). 6. We claim to have faith in God, but when our faith is put to the test we mostly fail miserably. Therefore we should pray, Lord, increase my faith, purify, refine it, that it may prove able to remove mountains, and to rejoice in the Lord although I should be desolate like Job (see Habakkuk 3:17, 18). 7. As God's children we are predestinated and called to be conformed to the image of God's Son (Rom. 8:29), but in our daily lives we are all far from it, otherwise we should be more hated and despised like Christ. We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin (Heb. 12:4). Therefore we should pray, Father, make us more and more conformed to the image of Thy dear Son, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

The praying for these things in the Spirit, through our Lord Jesus Christ, will experimentally prove the truth of “Seek ye *first* the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things (for our daily common needs) *shall* be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33 and context). God giveth always more than we ask for, and I firmly believe that in the life of the Christian everything hangs on the needful qualities as mentioned in these seven points.

Now for a short summary of seven other points which are requisite for effectual and prevailing prayer. 1. Separation from all known sins, by confessing and forsaking these in purpose of heart. If we regard iniquity in our heart, the Lord will not hear us (Psa. 66:18); if He did, He would be sanctioning sin. 2. Entire dependence upon the finished work of Christ and pleading His precious blood (Heb. 10:10, 1 John 1:7). 3. We must ask the Spirit of God to lead us in prayer, pray for us; for we know not what we should pray for as we ought (Rom. 8:26). 4. Faith in God's Word and His promises. Not to believe Him is to make Him a liar or perjurer (Heb. 11:6, John 3:33). 5. Asking according to His will (1 John 5:14). We must not

seek a gift from God to consume it upon our own lust (James 4:3). 6. We must offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, this is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks in His name (Heb. 13:15). Prayer as well as worship must be in Spirit and Truth; if not, it is of the flesh, and is a lie. 7. There must be waiting on God, waiting for God, as the husbandman has long patience to wait for the harvest (James 5:7; Luke 18:1 to 8). By A. Klooster. (Engaged in evangelistic work in Holland: looking to the Lord alone for the supply of every need. A.W.P.)

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by Arthur W. Pink

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November, 1932

### WRONGS RIGHTED

How many Christians there are who seldom get any real, definite, and remarkable answers to their prayers! How many, if they were frank, would have to acknowledge, "For some reason or other God does not answer *my* prayers." This ought to occasion much concern, exercise of conscience, and searching of heart before Him. God is more willing to give, than His people are to receive: He is their Father, and delights to make them happy: "Ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24). But God is *holy* and will not compromise with our sins, nor condone that which is evil; and He requires us to be holy too: 1 Peter 1:15, 16.

Yes, the sad fact remains that many Christians do not have the ear of God. Where this is the case, something is wrong in their lives, something which has "grieved the Spirit," and *choked* the channel of blessing. To them it has to be said, "Your sins have withholden good things from you" (Jer. 5:25). Nor is that word to be restricted to the present. I may be walking in the path of obedience today, and yet there may be something in the past which is hindering my entering into God's best for me now.

It behooves every Christian who is not regularly receiving striking and blessed answers to his or her prayers, to diligently review their past lives, in connection with their conduct both toward God and toward their fellow-men; earnestly begging the Holy Spirit to bring to their remembrance any thing which is grievous in His sight. When He does so, *it is not sufficient* to repent and merely confess the sin unto God! but where that sin has been against a fellow-creature, it must be confessed to him or to her (Matt. 5:23, 24;

James 5:16), and everything in my power must be done to right the wrong, and make full restitution (Luke 19:8).

Alas that there is so very little teaching along this line today. Alas that so many of God's dear children have rather been instructed to puzzle their brains over whether the parable of the ten virgins treats of “Christendom” or the Jews in the “Tribulation period,” or whether the battle of “Armageddon” is to be fought in a valley or on a mountain—occupation with such questions in *these* days makes us think of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! It is the *practical* side of Christianity, that which pertains to our *present* welfare, both spiritually and temporally which need to be chiefly pondered. But these popular teachers cannot give out what they do not have in their own hearts; and the daily lives of most of them make it only too evident that they are strangers to an experimental and practical knowledge of God in their souls. Give such men a wide berth, my reader, for neither their lectures nor their writings can do you any real good.

Not long ago the editor was speaking on this subject, and the Lord revealed to him that the message was specially designed for one Sister who was present about whose life he knew nothing what ever. After the meeting she requested a private interview, and confessed to him a terrible sin (not immorality), which she had committed years ago, known to no human being. To right that wrong meant deep humiliation and self-abasement before cherished friends. She told us she had been praying long and earnestly for the salvation of her husband. We told her that until that sin in her past life was put right, she might as well pray to the stove, as to an holy God. She slept little that night, fighting her battle alone before God. Grace gave her the victory. The next morning she assured us that she was fully willing to do all in her power to right the wrong, no matter what the cost to her. And now for the sequel.

When the above-mentioned Sister arrived home, some days later, God had unmistakably and gloriously saved her husband. She found him on his knees! He now conducts their family worship. It is a new home! Much more might be added by way of amplification, but sufficient has been said for our present purpose. Reader, *what* is hindering *your* getting wondrous answers to prayer? What sin, what wrong is there in your past life, which needs be righted, not only before God but with your fellow-man? O allow the Devil no longer to cheat you out of God's best for this life. Prayerfully re-read the above and *act upon it*. A.W.P.

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### THE LORDSHIP OF CHRIST

Our present subject brings before us a very different aspect of the Truth from that which engaged our attention in the last article: a greater contrast could scarcely be imagined—Christ the Servant, Christ the Sovereign; subject to the will of Another, exercising His own imperial pleasure; and that, at the same season! Verily, “Without controversy great is the mystery of Godliness: God was manifest in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16). In passing, let it be pointed out that the seeming conflict between the Divine justice and the Divine mercy, between God's sovereignty and man's responsibility, between the Christian's being “under grace” (Rom. 6:14) and yet “under law” (1 Cor. 9:21), between salvation itself being both a “gift” (Eph. 2:8) and a “reward” (Col. 3:24), presents no greater paradox than the above. Our bounden duty is to believe *both* sides of the paradox as they are revealed in the Scriptures, going as far with each as Scripture goes, and leaving with God the perfect consistency between them.

The Greek word for “lord” means one having personal right to rule, such as is exercised in the guiding and governing of a family; more properly it signifies a master or governor over servants, who are bound to obey him. Such a Governor and Ruler is Christ, whether we consider His title to this dominion or the exercise of it. He has this title to universal Lordship by creation (John 1:3)—having made all things. He has the right to dispose of them; by sustentation (Col. 1:16)—as the Preserver, He has the right to rule all things; by Divine appointment (John 3:35)—all things having been committed unto Him; by personal fitness (Col. 1:19).

There is a twofold “Lordship” belonging to Christ: one which is natural, absolute, underived, pertaining to Him as He is simply considered as second Person of the Trinity, to whom all the dignities and royalties of the Divine nature do belong, equally as to the Father and the Holy Spirit; which Lordship in all Three is founded upon Their joint concern in the making of all things and also in the governing of them. But there is also another “Lordship” pertaining to Christ, namely, a derived and dispensatory one, which is established by the counsels of God for the effecting of all His works both for and unto Him; which Lordship is proper and peculiar to Christ considered as God-man Mediator, to whom as such “all power” or “authority” has been given unto Him “in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18); “And hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man” (John 5:27).

It is this *delegated* or mediatorial Lordship of Christ which we are now to contemplate. It was of this that Peter spoke when he said, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). There is a “made” lordship of Him who yet, by virtue of it, made all things. Paul also referred to this when he said, “whom He hath appointed Heir of all things” (Heb. 1:2): “Heir” here is equivalent to “Lord,” and “appointed” to “made.” Christ’s being “Lord” evidently imports an office and economy committed to Him and undertaken by Him, as “Christ” also doth.

As “Lord” Christ has been appointed by the Godhead to “*rule over* all things.” He Himself avowed, “As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as Thou hast given Him” (John 17:2). Now it is a serious mistake to suppose that our blessed Redeemer only entered upon this office at His ascension, as it is to think that He has ceased to be Servant and no longer obeys in Heaven. Luke 2:11 emphatically declares, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David, a Saviour, which is Christ *the Lord*.” True, there was only an initial entering upon that office at His birth, the full assumption and exercise thereof awaiting His exaltation; nevertheless this, as we shall see, was real.

If we go carefully through the four Gospels with this thought before us, we shall catch many glimpses of Christ’s execution of His Lordship even during the days of His flesh. Listen to His words when the poor leper came to Him for healing, “And Jesus put forth His hand, and touched him, saying, *I will*, be thou clean” (Matt. 8:3). See Him cursing the fig tree (Matt. 21:19)—none could rightfully do so, save the Maker and Lord of it. Behold Him giving orders for the winds and waves to be still (Matt. 8:26). Ponder His repeated, “Verily, verily, *I say* unto you”: none other ever used such language. Observe Him authoritatively bidding disease to flee, and the dead to arise. See Him casting out demons, and causing them to quake before Him. What demonstrations were these that He who had taken upon Him the form of a Servant, had *not* relinquished His Lordship. Appropriately was His name called “Wonderful” (Isa. 9:6).

Again and again He referred to Himself in this character. To His disciples He said, “Pray ye therefore *the Lord of the harvest*, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:38). When bidding them ask for the use of the ass and its colt He said, “Ye shall say *the Lord* hath need of them” (Matt. 21:3). He commended His Apostles for owning Him as such: “Ye call Me, Master and Lord; and ye say well, for so I am” (John 13:13). His commissioning of His servants evidenced the same fact (Matt. 10:5-7; 28:19). His implicit demand for obedience from His followers showed the same thing (John 14:15). His possession of the keys of death and Hell (Rev. 1:18) manifest His high dominion. His appointing of officers in the

Church exhibits His Lordship (Eph. 4:11, 12). His rule over the churches demonstrates His sovereign dominion (Rev. 1-3). His opening and shutting of doors for His servants (Rev. 3:7) clearly displays His Lordship. His rewarding of His saints (Rev. 22:12) witnesses to this truth. His destroying of His enemies (Matt. 22:13) will solemnly attest it.

A word upon the character and scope of His Lordship. He is “Lord *of* all” (Acts 10:36), “Lord *over* all” (Rom. 10:12), and Lord *by* whom all creatures and things exist and consist: “But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him” (1 Cor. 8:6)—“one God” in three Persons; “one Lord” or Mediator. All things are of God originally, by Christ derivatively. This fact will be universally acknowledged at the last day, when “every knee shall bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is LORD” (Phil. 2:10). He is not only a universal Lord, but an all-powerful one, for He “shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to *subdue all* things unto Himself” (Phil. 3:21). He is an unrivalled Lord, the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15).

We trust that what has been brought out above will enable the reader to distinguish clearly between the Deity and the Lordship of Christ. In His person He *is* very God of very God. But when He took manhood into union with Himself, as Mediator the office of universal Lordship was delegated to Him. That office He assumed at His birth, executed throughout His earthly life, continues to discharge in Heaven, and will for all eternity. Even on the new earth the Lamb occupies the throne with God (Rev. 22:1). May Divine grace move each of us to say from the heart, “My Lord, and my God” (John 20:28). What are our responsibilities under such a Lord? First, to serve Him only—not sin and Satan: “Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve” (Matt. 4:10). He is to be served unreservedly: “Whatever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord” (Col. 3:23). He is to be served diligently: “Not slothful in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord” (Rom. 12:11). He is to be served perpetually: “For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's” (Rom. 14:8). May Divine grace enable us to heed that exhortation, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). A.W.P.

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### **PEACE: TRUE AND FALSE**

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, in all its parts, must ever be viewed from two sides: the Divine and the human. God is the Saviour, a human being the one saved. In the work of salvation, God does not deal with fallen men as inanimate and irresponsible entities, but as moral and accountable agents. The power which He puts forth in the realm of grace is quite different from that which He exerts in the sphere of material creation: the one is spiritual, the other is physical. God works in us so that we are moved to will and to do of His good pleasure. Thus, by noting the effects produced through us, we are able to trace the cause wrought in us: the fruit attests the root.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations with God, it necessarily follows that that salvation, is both an objective and a subjective thing; that is to say, it is both legal and experimental. Or, in simpler language still, it is both something which is done for us and something which is wrought in us. A salvation effected by a vicarious satisfaction rendered to the Law, but which left the sinner unchanged personally, would be a salvation at the expense of holiness. On the other hand, a salvation which effected the requisite change in the sinner but ignored the demands of the Law, would be a salvation at the expense of justice. Thus, justification and sanctification are inseparable.

Inasmuch as salvation is the bringing of a sinful creature into right relations to God, it necessarily follows that for peace to be adequately established, both the claims of Divine justice and of Divine holiness must

be met and maintained. Now this is only another way of saying that the wrath of God must be appeased, and also that the enmity of men must be slain: the curse of the law must be removed, and a love for the law implanted in the human heart. The sword of Divine justice must be sheathed, and the sinner must be made to throw down the weapons of his rebellion against the Law-Giver. Nothing short of this could be a satisfactory peace between the Creator and the creature.

“Can two walk together, except they be agreed?” (Amos 3:3). No indeed. Then what intercourse can there possibly be between a guilty rebel and a righteous but frowning Judge? Sin has severed the friendship which originally existed between the Creator and His creatures. As it is written, “But they rebelled, and vexed His Holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their Enemy, and He fought against them” (Isa. 63:10). In consequence of this, “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him” (John 3:36): note the present tense—the holy indignation of God will not only be upon the wicked in the Lake of Fire, but it rests upon them now; it cannot be otherwise, for “the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against *all* ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Rom 1:18).

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom. 8:7). “Their enmity against God does not lie still, but they are exceedingly active in it. They are engaged in a war against God. Indeed they cannot hurt God, He is so much above them; but they do what they can. They oppose themselves to His honour and glory: they oppose themselves to the interests of His kingdom in this world: they oppose themselves to the will and command of God: they oppose Him in His government. While God is doing one thing, they are doing the contrary, and as much as in them lies, counter-working; God seeks one thing, they seek directly the contrary. They list under Satan's banner, and are his willing soldiers” (Jonathan Edwards).

God has a controversy with the world, and bids His sinful and rebellious creatures cease their controversy with Him. Because they will not, He frequently gives signs of His displeasure and portents of the future storm of Divine judgment which shall yet burst upon the wicked and wholly engulf them. Every epidemic of disease, every severe storm on land and sea, every pestilence and famine, every earthquake and flood, is a mark of the Creator's anger, and presages the Day of Judgment. They are Divine calls for men to cease fighting against God, and solemn warnings of His awful and future vengeance if they will not.

But God is not only just and righteous, but gracious and merciful. Accordingly He has Himself laid a foundation for sinners to be at peace with Him. This is made known in the Gospel, which is designated “the Gospel of peace” (Eph. 6:15). In the Gospel an announcement is made both of what God (in His grace) has done, and of what God (in His holiness) requires from sinful rebels. In that Gospel God has made known the terms upon which amity with Him may be obtained. But, sad to say, we are living in times when the Gospel, like everything else, has been grievously perverted: when that aspect of it which is acceptable to the carnal mind has been made prominent, but when that aspect which is repellent to the flesh has been guiltily concealed. The more clearly God enables the writer to discern this, the more impelled is he to declare and expose it.

There are a great many tracts being circulated today the substance of which purports to give a conversation

between an evangelist and some earnest soul who has not yet entered into the full assurance of faith. The latter is represented as “seeking to make his peace with God,” whereupon the former flippantly replies, “You are two thousand years too late.” The evangelist is then pictured as asking the one to whom he is speaking, to open the Bible and read Colossians 1:20—”Having made peace through the blood of His cross.” Then the assertion is made, “*All* that is required from you is to believe that statement and rest upon the finished work which Christ did for you.” We greatly fear that thousands of precious souls have been fatally deceived by such superficial and faulty dealings with them.

First of all, let it be duly recognised that Colossians 1:20 *was not addressed* to unsaved people, but instead to “the saints and faithful brethren in Christ” (Col. 1:2). Any man who makes it his custom to take the “children's bread” and “cast it to the dogs” at once demonstrates that he is totally unqualified to deal with souls about Divine and eternal matters. O how many such are now running without being sent of God! How many “novices” (1 Tim. 3:6), are bringing the holy Truth of God into disrepute by a fleshly zeal which is not according to knowledge! Far better for “young converts” to keep their mouths closed altogether, than to open them to the dishonour of God. “Let every man be swift to hear, *slow to speak*” (James 1:19), is a much disregarded word these days of feverish activity.

In the second place, let the interested and earnest reader (who desires to please the Lord, rather than follow or be admired by men) turn to the book of Acts, and see if the Apostles ever preached to unsaved people anything resembling Colossians 1:20. If that important book be read through, it will be found that the message which the Apostles delivered to promiscuous crowds was radically different from the “evangelistic” preaching of these degenerate days. Even to Cornelius and his household, who had reverently gathered together to hear “all things that were commanded by God,” Peter declared “preaching peace by Jesus Christ: He is *Lord* of all” (Acts 10:36).—Peace comes to the sinner not simply by his believing on Christ as “Saviour,” but first by his bowing to Him as Lord: compare Colossians 2:6.

In the third place, to dwell exclusively on that aspect of truth declared in Colossians 1:20, is to ignore what has been pointed out in the opening paragraphs above, especially the second and third. Colossians 1:20, like Romans 5:1 and Ephesians 2:13-16 treats only of the legal and objective side of the subject, telling of what Christ did for those who repent and believe. But is it right, is it honest, is it pleasing to God, is it helpful to perishing souls, to remain silent upon the experimental side of reconciliation, and to say nothing of what God requires from rebellious men before any of them can have *applied to them* what Christ did for His people? Such men are either handling the Word of God “deceitfully” (2 Cor. 4:2), or in great ignorance.

In the fourth place, such tracts as we now refer to, and the type of teaching which they embody, betray a sad lack of acquaintance with Holy Writ. In Isaiah 27:5 we find Jehovah Himself saying, “let him take hold of My strength, that he may *make peace with Me*, and he shall make peace with Me.” Why that repetition, but that God, in His omniscience foresaw the evangelistic errors of these perilous times! The same teaching is found in the New Testament. The Lord Jesus declared, “What king, going to make war with another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassador and desireth *conditions of peace*. So LIKEWISE, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh

not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple” (Luke 14:31-33), which means he cannot be a Christian—see Matthew 28:19, Acts 11:26.

“The way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17): not “known” in a practical way—neither approved nor trodden it. The primary reference here is to an experimental ignorance of that way in which men must walk so as to further the good of their neighbors, for “peace” makes for concord and friendship. It is man's ferocity which has filled the world with animosities, murders, rebellions and wars. It has been truly said, “The most savage animals do not destroy so many of their own species to appease their hunger, as man destroys his fellows to satiate his ambition, his revenge, or cupidity” (Rob. Haldane).

Yet though the primary reference be unto man's relations unto his fellows, these words “the way of peace have they not known” may well be given a higher application. The way *of* peace is the way that leads *to* peace. There are many who have an intellectual acquaintance with the *ground* of peace with God (namely the perfect satisfaction which Christ made unto Divine law and justice), but it is greatly to be feared that the vast majority of them are total strangers experimentally to *the way of* peace. How few today even perceive that there *must be* a zealous renunciation of all those things which have furthered estrangement between God and men. How few today recognize the imperative necessity for casting away the weapons of rebellion against God, the bewailing of our high-handed crimes against Him, and the complete surrender of ourselves to His Lordship.

“There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked” (Isa. 57:21), and there never will be until they *make their peace with* their offended Maker. By “making our peace” with God, we *do not* mean the performing any works of merit, or doing something which entitles us to His favour. No indeed: *that* is utterly impossible. Instead, we mean that the sinner must heed the terms of such a verse as, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return (having, in Adam, departed) unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:7). God certainly will not pardon our sins while we deliberately remain in them.

By “making our peace with God” is meant that the rebel against God's holy Law *must truly repent*, and until this is done all the “believing” in the world is useless and worthless. Genuine repentance is a heart anguish for having despised and flouted the authority of the all-excellent God. It is a ceasing to be at enmity against God, and a becoming at enmity against sin. There cannot be peace with God while we are at peace with sin! We must, by Divine grace, be resolved to war against the world, the flesh, and the Devil, which constitute the trinity of evil—the arch-enemies of the Blessed Trinity. Peace is the unity and concord of men with God, and it is a contradiction in terms to speak of being at peace with Him if I am still striving against Him.

But there are some superficial people who (to their great loss despise the study of “theology”) imagine that what has been said above sullies the glory of Christ and detracts from the efficacy of His “finished work.” As well might they argue that His present intercession on High does so. What do these people suppose Christ came here to effect? To be the Condoner of sin? To render God less holy? To give a reprieve for the lusts of the flesh? To grant an indulgence for carnal walking? Far, far different was the case. He came here to magnify the Law and make it honourable (Isa. 42:21), to procure the Holy Spirit to regenerate and

sanctify His people (Gal. 3:13, 14), to leave them an example that they should follow His steps (1 Peter 2:21). Christ died not to reconcile God to our sins, but to bring us into the service, love, and enjoyment of God. True, *our* repentance and reformation would have been useless had not Christ lived and died; yet His atoning sacrifice avails no man who does not repent and surrender to His Lordship. Christ is most honoured when His servants teach that He died to save His people *from* their sins, and (by His Spirit's work) enable them to live holy lives in this present evil world.

“And ye, that *were* (not “are”!) sometime alienated and enemies (to God) in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath He reconciled” (Col. 1:21). How? By His Spirit overcoming their enmity, changing their hearts, turning them unto God. True, our reconciliation to God is no *cause* of God's reconciliation to us, yet according to the method which He has settled upon as being most agreeable to His glorious Being, to His pure holiness, His hatred of sin, the justice of His government, and the truth of His Word, we cannot say He *is* actually reconciled to us, till we are to Him. We must learn to distinguish between reconciliation purposed by the Father, purchased by Christ, applied by the Spirit, and appropriated by us through repentance and faith.

“When they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them” (1 Thess. 5:3). Those words have something more than a “dispensational” reference: they have a practical application. There are many ill-informed “evangelists” and “personal workers” who *are saying* “Peace and Safety” to those who give a bare assent to John 3:16, but “sudden destruction” shall yet come both on themselves and on their poor benighted victims. O my reader, as you value your soul, examine well the “peace” which you fancy *you* are enjoying. Has it brought to an end your rebellion against *God's law*, your resistance to the motions of His Spirit, your love of the world, your living to please self? If not, it is a *false* peace. Throw down the weapons of your wicked warfare against God. “Make peace” with Him ere His fury cast you into Hell.

“Take care, my dear friend, to clear away as far as possible everything that would *hinder* your believing. Now you may depend upon it that going into sin hinders believing. You cannot continue in willful sin and yet become a believer: sin cherished in the heart is an effectual hindrance. A man cannot be tied to a post and yet run away at the same time; if you bind yourself to your sin, you cannot escape. Withdraw at once from evil company—it is very deadly mischief to young seekers. You hear an impressive sermon, but then you go away talking with idle gossips, and you fall into frivolous chit-chat on the Sabbath afternoon: you cannot expect your soul to grow in the right direction under such influences. Get you to your knees, get you to solitude, get you to your God, get you to Jesus Christ; this it is that will roll away the stone which blocks the door” (C. H. Spurgeon from sermon on John 6:24).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

December, 1932

### SELF-JUDGMENT

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world”—1 Corinthians 11:31, 32.

*“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.”* Here we perceive a judgment to which the saints, and only the saints, are amenable; a judgment belonging solely to this life, exercised by Christ, who is the Judge. To Him the Church is accountable; every believer is responsible to Him for his thoughts, words and works. Nothing escapes His notice. He walks “in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks”; “His eyes are as a flame of fire”; “before Him all things are naked and opened” and He can still say to each and all, “I know thy works.” *This* tribunal is always set; the books are always open; from it no believer can altogether escape. Not that the Lord is strict to mark iniquity, or righteous to punish; if He were, “O Lord, who should stand?” The Lord Jesus has no haste to correct His children; He says, He does it not “from His heart.” And, indeed, the words above contain most gracious assurance of deliverance from correction, even though they have offended. They seem to say, indeed, that the Lord is slow to chasten, though His children be so faulty. His love for them is such, that not only shall they be delivered from all penal inflictions for sin (for these He has fully borne for them), but He would also show them *how to avoid His corrections*. There is something, therefore, exceedingly gracious in this notice given to the church, “If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged,” tending to confirm our confidence in our Lord, and in His amazing condescension and tenderness. The believer knows he must trust in Jesus implicitly and confide in Him entirely. When the storm and tempest rage the most furiously, he may run into his hiding-

place and find sweet repose from the world, the flesh, and the devil, for “the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the righteous runneth into it and is safe.”

Now if ever there was a time when this confidence could be shaken, it would be when the saint had sinned; but even then he may, and must, rest his soul in Jesus. Some of the Lord's children when overtaken in a fault, immediately expect correction at His hands, and through all of it walk heavily; but the passage also meets their case. It is a law of our great High Priest, and also our Judge, that, “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged”; that is, if we note when we have offended, and go directly to the Judge condemning ourselves, and confessing it to Him, He will pardon and pass it by. Wonderful condescension! He will allow the believer to be his own judge. What a proof that the Spirit is within him; yea, Christ Himself, the Hope of Glory! Having judged himself, and brought in the verdict of guilty, the believer will feel the paramount necessity of getting the blood sprinkled afresh upon him, and of turning out of the wrong path; and he is thus brought to the point, only more readily and speedily, to which chastening would have brought him. It is, if one might so speak, a nearer and easier way back into the right path; for the Lord only wishes us to walk with him, enjoying His presence and His smiles; and when we turn aside through frailty, the sooner we come back the better. It is not He who would keep us at a distance. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).

But alas! many walk so carelessly, “at all adventures with God,” that they offend, and are not aware of it. They are out of the way, and know it not. They are plainly, therefore, not in a capacity to judge themselves; and as sin must not be on the believer unknown and unconfessed, the good Lord will go after the careless one, and bring him into judgment. He will judge him, since he would not judge himself. But (if such an expression might be used) He would much rather His people should judge themselves. He would have them live so that He might always be present with them; and they might have their Lord continually, if, as soon as they sinned, they detected it, and acknowledged it; then they would cease to be guilty, and walking thus in the light, as He is in the light, the fellowship should not be broken, for the blood should “cleanseth from all sin.” The believer, thus cleansed and restored to obedience, *escapes the chastening*, for the end of the chastening is amendment; and if he has arrived at the latter, what need is there for the former? And O how like is this to our Lord! and how kind of Him to make it so plain to us! Should we not at least learn thus much from the words,—if He is so graciously desirous not to chasten, how very careful should be our walk with Him!

Now this was not the case with these Corinthians; they sinned again and again, and seemed to take no account of it. They were carnal; there was among them envying and strife, and division; still they judged not themselves. The Lord, who is slow to anger, waited long, and they only went further and further astray, till at last, in the abuse of His supper, He was compelled to be the Judge. Perhaps Peter's was a case like the former; he judged himself. His bitter tears told of his guilt and his sorrow, and not a word of upbraiding does he hear. The very angels have a special message for him: “Tell His disciples and Peter, that He is risen” etc. And our Lord was “Seen of Cephas, then of the twelve.” “The Lord is risen indeed, and hath appeared unto Simon.”

Note the words *guilt* and *guilty*, in the above, have nothing whatever to do with the believer's state before God; for in Christ he is as free from the imputation of sin as the risen Surety. But if the washed one offend

in neglecting to wash his feet, he will bring the sense of guilt into his conscience, which may be so strong as to make him forget he has been purged from his old sins. The Lord vouchsafe us tender consciences, and the sprinkling of the blood of Jesus, to which we are elected.

*“But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world.”*

*“When we are judged of the Lord we are chastened.”* He does not always tell us our fault first; we are so selfish and unwilling to suffer, that we are willing then to search ourselves, and we see wherefore this evil is upon us. Having sinned and failed to confess, we are laid open to His displeasure; to escape then is hopeless. O the bitterness of provoking Him to punish us, our best Friend; that One who poured out His life's blood for us; who endured the sharpest inflictions of justice to screen us; Him whose heart is love, and on the sense of whose love all our happiness depends! Yet, we forfeit all, and compel Him to restrain His lovely smile, put on instead a frown, take the rod in His hand, and chasten us for our folly. Then we cannot escape: smite He will. How long and how much, we must leave to Him. We are completely in His hands; His power over us is supreme, entire; resistance is vain, and will certainly increase the affliction. There is nothing to be done, but humbly to lie down before Him, and submit to His will. He may punish severely; often He does. He may punish long; and there is no promise that it shall not be so. The suffering child has but one resource, but one door of hope; it is love, the exquisite, surpassing love of Him who is chastening. On that he throws himself, as Quarles says, “I turn from Lord to Jesus; From Thyself to Thee.”

Yes, there is none other. He who inflicts the pain can withdraw His hand; He who has wounded, can bind up; He who has laid us in the dust by His frown, can raise us up by His smile. Yes, He can forgive, He can restore; He can heal. “He will not always chide.” He will “turn again,” perhaps meaning He will relent, as the parent when he has punished the child; never is his heart so soft as then. So our Jesus: “Since I spake against him, I do earnestly remember him still; therefore My bowels are troubled for him. I will surely have mercy upon him, saith the Lord.” This, this is a mercy, an infinite mercy, that we are in the hands of One so tender, so loving, who does not like to put us to pain, who does it unwillingly, and longs to restore us to favour. But there is still a greater mercy in the reason assigned for correction; it is “that we should not be condemned with the world.” Ah it is enough to make one tremble to think of the ungodly, who never having been chastened here, will hereafter bear the full punishment of all their offences. But it is not so with us, thanks be to God, we are judged here, not there; in this world, not in the next. And it is because we shall be acquitted hereafter that Christ our Lord must of necessity notice our offences here: “You only have I known,” etc. The wicked go free, the houses are safe from fear, neither is the rod of God upon them, for this reason, their reckoning is future, ours is present. Let us bless the Lord for His kind care of us, and for not suffering us to take our own way. Let us not rebel against His loving discipline, but thank Him for being so particular with us, (2 Cor. 10:18), seeing that His dealing points to our high destiny, and issues in our everlasting blessedness, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

—A Servant of the Church, 1855.

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January, 1933

### Letter to a Deeply Exercised Soul

Dear A.—You doubtless will be surprised that so humble and unworthy an individual as myself should attempt to address you. It is however by no means uncongenial, with my feelings, though under a deep sense of my utter inability to do so, suitable, but “Unto Thee lift I up mine eyes, O Thou that dwellest in the Heavens;” for Thou seest every secret and hidden thing, and Thou knowest Thy handmaid altogether, and searchest all the hearts of the children of men. O minister to her present necessities, though the unworthiest of Thy creatures whom Thou hast brought up from the pit of corruption, and saved from the lowest hell, and raised from the gates of the grave, to tell her fellow-sinners that Thou hast saved to the uttermost. However low they may be sunk in the mire, Thine arm can reach them, and Thy salvation set them on high. Breathe, Holy Comforter! instruct Holy Teacher! or we shall read and write in vain.

Dear A., you lately desired to know of *yourself*. But O you little thought what the horrifying sight and awful realization of evil which the granting of such a desire would bring. Perhaps you hoped for more solid assurances that you were *right* by having your heart turned inside out. But verily such a laying open of ourselves to ourselves makes all appear *wrong*. Perhaps you thought the painful sight would soften you into tears of penitence, and the humbling view lay you gently down in the dust of self-abasement, and that thus, as a polluted sinner, you should weep and love at the dear Redeemer's feet. But ah! these blessed feelings are more from the joys of salvation than the dark discoveries of guilt; more in being found than feeling we are lost. To know yourself and what your sin is, methinks you could not bear to the full extent. The corruption of fallen humanity is so offensive, its deceptiveness so deep, its outrage against

Omnipotence so daring, and its callousness under all so impenetrable, that surely the fullest sense of it must crush finite worms into despair, and drive them out of existence. But mark, it would never bring them to the Mercy-seat; it would not fill them with prayer, and hope, and humble cries for pardon. The terrible majesty and holiness of the Being sinned against, and the feeling of His fearful and dreadful power, and justice, would strike the soul to a farther and farther distance from Him; not in the *softness* of contrition, but in the hardening of hopelessness. I do humbly believe, that would be the effect of discovering the whole depth of our depravity in the full light of Jehovah's strict holiness, such will be the effect, in a lesser degree, as we discover some of that depravity by some rays of that searching light; for it is "light that maketh manifest." As Adam when he discovered his nakedness, did not run to God, but from Him; so it is with every soul of man; and so it seems with you; for you say that under insensibility, hardness, and carelessness, you are not driven to the Throne of Grace, but to the contrary. Sin does not bring forth *life*; but sin, when it is finished, "bringeth forth *death*," and as it works, produces deathliness of feeling.

All do not learn the mystery of iniquity to the same extent, but it is decreed every soul that is saved shall feel something of its painful experience, something of what they are saved from and out of, as well as what they are saved unto. In learning this they find a strange work; in this lesson many hard sayings which they can hardly bear. They have read that the "heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked"; and "that he who trusts in his own heart, is a fool." But they find it a very different thing to *feel* the deceivableness of unrighteousness at work within, and to be brought off from trusting the heart, because they feel its treachery and vileness. They have *confessed* they were sinners, and believed it; but to *feel* sin working distance, darkness, coldness, and hardness, is experimental proof of sinnership, which feels more like *destruction* than *salvation*, and seems very far from drawing them to God. Should this present year of your life be spent chiefly under this dark discipline, you will often feel that if the blessing is coming, it is indeed "cross-handed"; and that if prayer is being answered, it is truly by most unexpected contrarities. Nevertheless, as the Stone cut out of the mountain without hands must destroy all kingdoms, that it may fill the whole earth, so must this wondrous Stone break in pieces in our souls the iron, brass, clay, the silver and the gold (Dan. 2:34)—things that we have counted refuse, and things that we have held in estimation; all that is ours must come forth to destruction that we may be saved, and Christ to us "all in all." He cannot fill us while we are filled, or half filled, with anything else, seem it badness or goodness; whatever form it may assume, be it not Christ it is nought, and is a work of the flesh or the devil. But for this purpose was the Son of God manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). He comes to the renewed soul as a "refiner's fire and as fuller's soap," but who may "abide the day of His coming?" (Mal. 3:2). None but those whom He has created anew in Himself. All that is of our flesh shall be as stubble before Him, and we need not fear its destruction, for it will ever do wickedly. And bless His holy name, He will take care of the jewel, the precious *life* which He has implanted in the soul, while He deals thus roughly with our deeds of darkness. He is only bringing us to what we often talk about,—to be nothing, that He may be all in all, and that we may glory in Him alone.

You say, how much of self you see working in your past life. You see truly, but you see not half of the abominations of this image that "provoketh to jealousy." I have been here before you, and I speak from experience, and though turned again and again to see greater abominations of self, which were to issue in the lifting up of "Jesus on High" in my soul, into which He came like the ark into Dagon's temple (1 Sam. 5:4), when His powerful presence caused the hateful self which I had set up to fall prostrate and lose its

head and feet, so that now it is good for nothing, and can neither work nor walk, though it would often pretend. As said Delilah to Samson, “The Philistines be upon thee”; so would I say to this marring, proud, hateful, self, “The power of Christ's death be ever upon thee” (2 Cor. 4:10). Nothing else will ever bring it down; and as the Holy Spirit first leads us through the “chambers of imagery” and reveals the hidden things of our own darkness, so does He afterwards reveal Christ and gives us *victory* through Him. The Holy Spirit breathes upon our fancied godliness (Isa. 40:6, 7) to make it wither; so is it that the beauty of the Lord our God (Psa. 90:17) may be upon us, that we may understand those sweet words, “Ye are complete in Him,” and that “he that glorieth may glory in the Lord.”

You complain that the Bible which you once enjoyed is now to you a sealed book. May not this be another answer to know, or to your desire to know, more of *yourself*? For you find that yourself may read the Word, quote the Word, and have some judgment and light in the Word, yet you cannot find the Word, and eat it, and make it the joy and rejoicing of your soul. Yourself cannot unlock the secrets contained therein, cannot “receive the sincere milk of the Word, so that ye may grow thereby,” or eat the strong meats when you please. May you not hereby be learning that you are not ignorant in Divine things, and that Christ must be your wisdom? that you are powerless, and that He must be the power of God unto you for salvation and instruction in righteousness? May not the Holy Spirit be going forth in your soul like the voice of John in the wilderness, to “prepare the way of the Lord” before Him, and to make straight in your seemingly desert heart a highway for our God? And may He not, ere long, say to you with almighty power, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world?” When by faith you behold Jesus as your Surety and Savior standing in your law-place, bearing your sin and guilt, and delivering your soul from punishment, by being Himself, your ransom, then will your heart dissolve, and tears of thankfulness flow. Having sweet forgiveness you will love Him much, and desire “to know no will but His.” “Old things will pass away, and all things become new,” and you will become a new creature in a new world, whilst His gracious presence remains with you.

May it please the Lord that your painful exercise may end in this glorious issue. There are those now triumphing in Christ who have traveled mournfully through this wilderness of self before you and found it a land of darkness and drought and shadow of death, and thought while in it that it was a land which none of the Lord's living ones ever passed through. But He turned for them the shadows of death into mourning. May He also do a sure work in your soul, and give you feelingly to say, “Behold, for peace I had great bitterness; but Thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption, for Thou hast cast all my sins behind Thy back” (Isa. 38:17).

Your letter made me weep well, knowing the bitterness of the “wormwood and gall.” “My soul hast thou still in remembrance, and is humbled in me.” I had hoped that the Lord was going to bring you forth to the light, that you might behold His righteousness. I have not come unto you with smooth things, but having spread yours before the Lord, who “knoweth the end from the beginning” (Isa. 46:10). Such as I have, give I unto thee. If He said it, may He bless it to your soul's benefit, and He shall have the glory; if not, may my unworthy self be pardoned.

I remain, yours ever affectionately, ONE WHO HAS BEEN IN THE FURNACE, 1856.

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by Arthur W. Pink

March, 1933

### **Christian Perfection**

I suppose that every Christian has been exercised at some time or other by verses in Scripture containing the word “perfect” or “perfection.” While convinced that those who lay claim to sinless perfection err, yet probably you have not been fully satisfied by any explanation which you have seen of those verses. For example, take such passages as the following: “We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6): the Holy Spirit speaking through Paul acknowledges some are “perfect,” and He was referring to those still on earth. “This also we wish, even your perfection” (2 Cor. 13:9): that was the desire and longing of the Apostle for those saints; did he wish for something unattainable, impossible? “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable . . . that the man of God may be perfect”: such a verse ought to exercise us. “But the God of all grace . . . make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10): this too is while we are on earth. “I have not found thy works perfect before God” (Rev. 3:2), which clearly intimates they ought to have been: the Ephesians were being rebuked because their works were imperfect.

Such verses as the above have puzzled and troubled many. Honest hearts have been exercised as to the exact meaning of the term “perfect” or “perfection.” I want then, this morning, to try and give you an outline of the teaching of God's Word on this important subject. Let us turn next to Job 1:1, “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect.” Yet in 9:20 Job says, “If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me; if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse.” There seems to be a flat contradiction between those two verses. The explanation is simple: the word “perfect” is

used in different senses in those two passages. Job 9:20 signifies, If I were to say I am sinless, faultless, absolutely perfect, I should lie. But what is meant in Job 1:1 where God Himself says that he was “a perfect man”? The term there, and in many other passages of the Old Testament means “sincere, honest”; such verses speak of a perfection *of sincerity* as opposed to hypocrisy; compare Ephesians 6:24.

But there are other verses, especially in the New Testament, where that definition does not fit, where the word “perfect” signifies much more than “honest” or “upright,” and which are by no means easy to interpret. I refer to such verses as we looked at at the beginning. Those verses trouble sincere souls, for such feel that they are very imperfect. While it is true that the Christian may be able to rejoice over what he reads in Hebrews 10:14 — “by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified”—yet he mourns and grieves over many imperfections. Coming more closely to our subject, I want to carefully consider what *kind* of “perfection” is attainable in this life by the saint. In Philippians 3:15 Paul says, “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect,” and yet in the 12th verse of the same chapter the Apostle affirmed of himself, “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect.” Now Scripture does not contradict itself, yet we need to make distinctions, discriminating between things that differ.

1. We must discriminate between *legal and evangelical perfection*. Legal perfection is that complete and constant conformity in desire, thought, word and deed which God requires from us unto His holy and righteous law. This is the perfection which God demands from every creature—a full and flawless obedience, both internal and external, loving Him with all our hearts and our neighbors as ourselves; and this, not occasionally, but perpetually. This has been God's demand in every age, and it cannot be lowered. “Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them” (Gal. 3:10), is the Divine sentence resting upon every transgressor. There must be a steady perseverance in doing those things which God has commanded, and in abstaining from all those things which He has prohibited. But no fallen human being can possibly meet that demand. As Romans 8:3 declares, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh”: an imperfect man cannot live perfectly; a sinful creature cannot yield sinless obedience.

Now it is at this point the marvelous grace of God towards His people appears. As Romans 8:3-4 tells us, “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us.” God sent His Son here as *the surety* of His elect to meet the demands of the law by perfectly obeying it in their stead. But does this mean that Christ fulfilled the law for us so that *our* responsibility to the law has been removed? Does it mean that Christ has kept the law so that there is no longer need for *us* to keep it? No, that could not be. God cannot forego His claims, and Christ would be the minister of sin if He had introduced a system of lawlessness. What then? Christ has procured for His people the gift of the Holy Spirit, and in regeneration the Spirit begets in our hearts *a love for the law*, a desire after that which is holy and righteous before God, and the real Christian longs to meet God's claims, walk obediently, and endeavors *to* do so. Through Christ God accepts this real desire and genuine effort to obey Him. Here then is where we must draw the first distinction on “perfection”: we must discriminate between legal and evangelical perfection.

Legal perfection or sinless obedience was found only in Christ. Evangelical perfection or sincere

obedience is found in every Christian. By “sincere obedience” is meant an honest desire and a real effort to keep the law, please God in all things, not allowing any known sin. Evangelical perfection is primarily a thing of the heart, at which God ever mainly looks. The Christian seeks to please and honor God in all things: I speak of what is characteristic or general of him, that which marks the main tenor of his heart and life. Let me illustrate this point to you. The needle of a ship's compass which is in working order, always points to the north. You may take that compass and jar it, and the needle will swing in another direction; but when that compass regains its level, or the interfering finger is removed, the needle resumes its normal and correct relation. Now the normal condition of the heart of a regenerated person points toward God, seeks God, desires God, aims to please Him. There are times—in the storms of life, in the disturbances of temptation, in the assaults of Satan—when the heart is deflected and turned away from God; and this happens frequently in the experience and life of every Christian for “in many things we offend all” (James 3:2). Nevertheless, just as surely as the needle of the compass when released from an interfering power turns again to the north, so the heart of a regenerated person comes to itself, recovers its poise, and instinctively turns back to God.

Now this evangelical perfection has marked God's children in every dispensation. Unto Abraham—the father of all them that believe—the Lord said, “I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). That was God's standard then: a heart completely surrendered to His claims, a sincere desire and determination to please Him in all things. “I beseech thee, O Lord, remember now how I have walked before Thee in truth and *with a perfect heart*, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” (2 Kings 20:3). This is a verse which has puzzled many, particularly the words we have placed in italics. Was Hezekiah lying? Can you conceive of a man who was dying turning to the Lord and uttering a deliberate falsehood? Was he mistaken? No. The mistake is ours, if we fail to interpret this in the light of other Scriptures. Hezekiah did not mean that his was a sinless heart, nor one that had never deviated from God: but instead, a heart that, in its deepest depths, in its genuine nature, in its real tenor, desired to please God, and which despite many failures, had sought to do so. And this is something which every one that will enter Heaven must have.

“And thou, Solomon, my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with *a perfect heart and with a willing mind*: for the Lord searcheth all hearts” (1 Chron. 28:9). Here is another scriptural declaration which helps us to understand the nature of evangelical perfection: the obedience which God requires must be performed readily and not by constraint, with a willing mind. It must be spontaneous, and not compulsory. It must proceed from love, and not from terror. That obedience which is acceptable to God issues from the gratitude of a renewed heart, and is rendered freely, and not from external constraint. So that to serve Him with “a perfect heart and a willing mind” signifies to obey Him, readily and gladly, freely and out of love. As a contrast from 1 Chronicles 28:9 take 2 Chronicles 25:2, “And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, *but not with a perfect heart.*” Amaziah had received a godly training and had acquired certain godly habits: his external conduct was according to God's law; but He who looks within declared that his heart was not perfect—which refers not to a state of sinlessness, but signifies that his heart was not even honest, it did not ring true. There was not a real desire to please God and an ardent effort to carry out that desire. That is very solemn. It makes one think of James 1:8, “A double minded man is unstable in all his ways,” and O how many such there are in Christendom today!

Perhaps some amplification of what has just been before us may prove helpful. How often we meet with people who are scarcely the same twice together: they are as variable as the weather. On some occasions they appear to be really spiritual, ready to talk about Divine things, anxious to know the way of the Lord more perfectly, desirous of pleasing Him. But, perhaps only a few days later, you find them thoroughly wrapped up in the things of the world, with no appetite at all for spiritual converse. The hearts of such people are like the pendulum of a clock in action: never stationary, ever swinging to and fro. It is as the Lord said of Israel of old, “Their heart is divided” (Hosea 10:2)—vacillating between love of self and love of God, fluctuating between occupation with Christ, and occupation with the world. O my friends, this is solemn and searching: God will not tolerate a rival. Do not mock Him by seeking to give Him half your heart; do not insult Him by imagining that you can love Him and the world too. Be either one thing or the other: 1 Kings 18:21, Revelation 3:15.

Now to sum up this first point of distinction. Legal perfection is that sinless perfection which the Law demands from man: that absolute, undivided, continuous obedience, both inward and outward, to all its precepts. This strict and faultless obedience Christ rendered unto the Law in the stead of and on behalf of His people. Evangelical perfection is that sincere desire of a renewed heart to please God in all things, a desire which is inseparably linked to an honest determination and effort *to* do so. True, that desire is never fully realized by any of us in this life; yet He who looks at and knows the heart, perceives its true and deep longings after Himself, and so, for Christ's sake, accepts the will for the deed.

2. We must distinguish between *absolute and relative perfection*. And here too the former was found only in Christ, for He alone received the Spirit “without measure” (John 3:34). He is the only one that could truthfully say, “I do *always* those things which please Him” (John 8:29). How blessed and refreshing it is for our hearts to turn away from the world, from considering our own failures, and contemplate that blessed One who lived here for thirty-three years, the eye of the Father ever upon Him and always seeing that which delighted Him, ever able to say, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” And *Christ* is the standard which God sets before us. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5); “Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:21); “he that saith he abideth in Him ought Himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

God has set before us a perfect standard, but it is never fully reached by any Christian, for the flesh is still left within us, and “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). Now that very opposition between the flesh and the Spirit in the Christian, issuing in so many failures and sins, causes him to hang his head in shame, groan and cry “O wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:24). That was true of Paul himself: this was his experience. It was the beloved Apostle who said, “O wretched man that I am,” and he said it not before conversion, nor during the early years of his Christian life, but much later on. So with us there is a daily failing, and need for a daily forgiveness. Yet, while sinless perfection is unattainable by us now, there *is* a relative perfection which should be reached by the Christian, and which may be attained in this life. Let me seek to define the nature of this.

It is really twofold. First, *as Christians are compared with non-Christians*. In contrast from the unconverted, the saints are subject to Christ: they have surrendered to His Lordship, accepted His yoke,

and so are “perfect” in contrast from those who yield not themselves to Him. “Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt *be perfect*, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in Heaven: and come and follow Me” (Matt. 19:21). The obvious meaning of that word was, “If thou wilt be a Christian, if you are anxious to be saved, here is what you must do—go and sell what you have, give to the poor, come and follow Me.” In other words, if you wish to enjoy the *privileges* of the Gospel you must submit to the *rules* of the Gospel. Thus, the word “perfect” is used here in a relative way, to describe the Christian in contrast from the non-Christian. In Christianity “perfection” is found, in contradistinction from Judaism: see Hebrews 6:1. Judaism was but the blade; Christianity is the full corn in the ear. When one becomes a Christian he has reached relative “perfection,” in contrast from those who are not Christians.

Before passing on, we had better anticipate a question, suggested by “If thou wilt be perfect, go sell that thou hast,” which should be linked up with Luke 14:33. The question is this, Does God require me to part with all that I have? The answer is Yes, and No. Yes, in the sense that God requires me to hold everything that I have at His disposal; and it may be that before many months have passed He will put some of us to the test. God requires me to hold every object I have in this world at *His* disposal, so that if He makes it clear I am to relieve His poor suffering people to the extent that I should give away every cent, I am to do so. Nothing that I have is *mine* absolutely: this must be recognized and owned. What I have is only loaned me by God. Then does this mean that it is wrong for me to have any money in the bank at the present time? No; it means I am to say, “Lord Thou hast been pleased to prosper me, I have so much on hand, but it is for Thee to say how it shall be used: if it is Thy will for me to keep it, Thy will be done; if it is Thy wish for it to be used in relieving the distress of others, I am ready to do so.” The man who does this has a “perfect” heart: there is no reserve in it, it is fully yielded to God. The man who has not done this is no Christian: he is not regenerated, for his heart treasures gold more than God; if he will not place his gold at God's disposal, that money is his god—which proves that he is unsaved. When God saves a man He works in him *a miracle* of grace: He changes the natural character or bent of the heart. It is the natural bent of the heart to hold on to that which we have worked hard to obtain; but the supernatural grace of God makes us willing to lay all at the Lord's feet.

This is true not only of gold, but of our *children* also. A regenerated person will place each child at the absolute disposal of God, saying, It is not mine, it is Thine to do with as Thou pleaseth; to enlighten or to leave in darkness, to save and send forth as a missionary to the heathen, or to remain here; it is *Thy* creature, and my heart relinquishes all absolute claims upon it. Everything we have and are must be laid before God, and by the heart truly held at His sovereign disposal. This is the nature of *relative* Christian “perfection”: it is the difference between the heart of a converted and an unconverted person.

Second, there is a relative perfection *as one Christian may be compared with other Christians*. Even saints differ much among themselves. Though none attain unto absolute and sinless perfection, yet there are several degrees of grace and diversity of growth among Christians. There are babes, young men, fathers: (1 John 2:13): the strong and mature Christian is relatively “perfect” in contrast from the weak and immature, who has less wisdom to detect error and less strength with which to resist sin and Satan. I want us to look at Scripture in connection with this point. “That we be no more children, tossed to and fro” (Eph. 4:14); God is not honored by our remaining spiritual dwarfs; He is not glorified by a Christian continuing a spiritual child all his days. We should outgrow our spiritual baby hood.

“We speak wisdom among them that are perfect” (1 Cor. 2:6): “perfect” here means matured, fully grown, in contrast from spiritual babes. The Corinthians were squabbling, one saying “I am of Paul,” and another “I am of Apollos”: they were so carnal as to be fighting among themselves; consequently the Apostle said, “I could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ” (3:1). So you see there *are* differences among God's people. “For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age” (Heb. 5:13, 14). “Brethren, be not children in understanding: . . . be men” (1 Cor. 14:29)—act like such. “Stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong” (1 Cor. 16:13). Those who are well instructed by the Spirit in the mysteries of the faith, who have made real progress in practical godliness, who are firm and established in their love for God, are, comparatively “perfect” in contrast from the “babes” in Christ.

3. There is also a “perfection” *of parts*. Let me illustrate from the physical. A child born minus a limb lacks a complete or perfect body; so one born with two arms and loses one, no longer has a complete or perfect body. Thus it is if a Christian lacks the development of any of the really vital graces: he may have faith, zeal, perseverance, but if he lacks compassion, he is deficient—his spiritual character is maimed. If a Christian has tenderness, patience, great consideration for others, but lacks courage, faithfulness, unflinching righteousness, he is lacking in parts. 2 Peter 1:5-7 is for the correcting of this, inculcating the fully developed Christian character, bidding us cultivate all the graces of the Spirit, and thus be a “perfect” Christian, that is, complete in all his parts. “May grow up into Him in *all* things, which is the Head, even Christ” (Eph. 4:15)—not only in faith, courage, patience, but in everything.

4. There is also a “perfection” *of degrees* or growth in grace, an advancing from spiritual baby hood to spiritual maturity. “When I was a child I spake as a child . . . but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (1 Cor. 13:11). See the little one surrounded by its toys in the nursery: behold the same child fifteen years later—it has no use for those toys, it has outgrown them. So it should be with us spiritually. Look again at an infant: it is easily peeved, it cries at almost anything: that is the characteristic of a “child”; and it is largely the same with a “babe” in Christ—worrying and fretting over trifles. “When I became a man, I *put away* childish things”: God help us all to do so.

An address (revised) given by the editor to a little company in the home God has kindly loaned us. A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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March, 1933

### Sound the Alarm

The saddest feature to us which is now presented by the worldwide “Depression,” is not the material destitution which has overtaken millions of our fellow creatures, but the spiritual poverty of so many of our dear Brethren and Sisters in Christ. They seem to be as helpless as the poor worldlings, and while no doubt they all have faith that God will not let them starve to death, yet they apparently know of nothing better than simply to ask Him to be merciful, and give them patience to wait until times get better again. While they cannot be entirely innocent with the Word of God to their own hand, yet we are convinced that they are more to be pitied than blamed. By far the greater part of the guilt rests upon the preachers and “Bible teachers” whom they have sat under during the past twenty years.

If those who were so zealous in denouncing “Modernism,” “Higher Criticism,” “Evolution,” ad lib., ad nauseam, had devoted their energies unto teaching their hearers what it means to *walk with God*, He had been more honored, and they had been more helped. If those who so loudly and so constantly warned against “Russellism,” “Pentecostalism,” “Eddyism” etc., etc., had been faithful in warning the professing people of God against the sins of covetousness, luxury, and extravagance, and had emphasized the teaching of Scripture upon mortification and the denying of self, though they had not been so popular, far more real good had been accomplished. If those who were so diligent in bidding people “rightly divide the Word of Truth,” and adopt their arbitrary methods of sectioning the Scriptures — allocating this part to a company in the remote past, and another part to some company in the distant future—had shown their congregations how to apply the Scriptures practically unto all the varied details of their lives, we should

not now witness the pathetic sign which we do.

Were we to follow our own inclinations, we had much prefer writing along different lines from what we are now doing, but we dare not remain silent any longer. While so many of God's people are still in danger of being deceived by blind leaders, it is high time to warn those whom our pen can reach. So many seem to think that because a preacher is “sound” on all the “fundamentals,” that his messages must be helpful: that because they hear “faithful” sermons on the Divine Inspiration of the Scriptures, the Virgin birth of Christ, and so on, that their souls are getting just the food they need. This by no means follows. There is “a *time* to every purpose under the heaven” (Eccl. 3:1), there is “the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12), there is such a thing as “a word *in season*” (Isa. 50:4). The tragic thing is that scarcely any of the present-day leaders recognize or are experimentally equipped to give out such.

We are well aware that the above language is strong and sweeping, but the published programs of the “Bible conferences,” the “subjects” being taken at the “Bible Institutes,” the titles of religious books now being published, all illustrate and demonstrate the truth of what we have said. When we hear of those that are without work and reduced to almost the lowest point of existence, being entertained with lectures on “Daniel's seventy weeks” and interpretations of the symbols of the Apocalypse, it makes us think of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning! When we hear of the homes of Christians being seized and sold, and of other saints being dependent upon unsaved relatives, it seem high time that some voice was raised asking the question, Is *that* a testimony which honors Christ? Is that an experience which witnesses unto the *faithfulness* of God to undertake for His own?

Instead of the poor, suffering, bewildered children of God having explained unto them what is signified by the “four horses” of Revelation 6, or who is represented by the “two beasts” of Revelation 13, they need to be shown how to pray down temporal blessings, how to have God working miracles for them, how to bring about the fulfillment of some of His wondrous promises. But who is there that is engaged in such a ministry today? Are there none who are now proving for themselves the sufficiency of God, and can point the way for others to do likewise? Yes, here and there, there is one who is experimentally acquainted with the God of Elijah; but O how pathetically few is their number!

Has not God declared that He is ready *to* “shew Himself strong in the behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him” (2 Chron. 16:9)? Certainly He has, and He cannot lie. If then God has *not* shown Himself “strong” on your behalf, and if He is not *now* doing so, then it must be because your heart has not been and is not now “perfect toward Him.” Ah, it is at the *heart* God ever looks! Nor does a “perfect” heart here signify a sinless one—see our article upon “Christian Perfection” in this issue. No, a “perfect” heart is one which genuinely trusts, loves, and obeys God. A “perfect” heart is one which has been weaned from all idols, and finds its satisfaction in the Lord Himself.

“Six days shalt thou labor” (Exo. 20:9). That is as much a Divine command as “The seventh day (after the six—note it does not say “the seventh day of *the week*”!) is the Sabbath of the Lord thy God, in it thou shalt not do any (unnecessary) work.” But there is many a Christian man who is not working at all. Why? “Because there is none available for him.” Ah, that is the answer a worldling would give: “Because *God* is providing none for him” is better, for that places the emphasis where it rightly belongs. And why is not

God obtaining an opening for honorable employment? There must be some reason: nothing happens by chance. If you have asked Him to undertake for you, and He has not done so, may not that show you have not His ear!

“Be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses My servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whither soever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth; but thou shalt meditate therein day and night, that thou mayest observe to do according to all that is written therein: for *then* thou shalt make thy way prosperous, and *then* thou shalt have good success” (Josh. 1:7, 8). How many have not “prospered” and do not enjoy “good success”! True, and is the reason far to seek? Have they fulfilled the terms which God has here specified? If not, is not the fault their own? Perhaps someone says *that* promise does not concern *us*. But why not? Is not Joshua 1:5 applied to all Christians in Hebrews 13:5! It is the devil who seeks to persuade us that such *searching* promises as these do not pertain unto Christians today.

“Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for My sake, and the Gospel's, But he shall receive an hundredfold now in *this* time, houses, and brethren, and sisters, and mothers, and children, and lands, with persecutions; and in the world to come eternal life” (Mark 10:29, 30). Here is a *New Testament* promise which relates to *material* blessings. But mark, it is also a *conditional* one; it is only for those who genuinely put Christ first in their lives; who, at His call, are willing to forsake all things for Him.

Now three things are indispensable if we are to enjoy God's blessings, rather than suffer His chastisements. First, all known sin—past as well as present—must be repented of, confessed, and forsaken (Prov. 28:13). It is unpardoned sins which withhold good things from us (Jer. 5:25). This principle has always obtained, and will unto the end of time. Second, real trust in the Lord: “According unto your faith be it unto you” (Matt. 9:29). Even the promises of God avail us not unless they be personally “embraced” (Heb. 11:13). “Ye have not, because ye ask not” (James 4:2)—ask not with a real, living, expectant, persistent faith. Third, an honest effort to serve Him: God will not place a premium upon disobedience. In keeping His commandments there is “great reward” (Psa. 19:11). True, we do not *purchase* God's favors; nevertheless, in His moral *government* of the world, He stands pledged to recompense the righteous “in the earth” (Prov. 11:31).

The whole history of Israel supplies an illustration of what we have been saying above. God prospered or chastened them in accord with their conduct toward Him. And the principles of His governmental dealings have not changed. When Israel fasted, repented, reformed, and served the Lord wholeheartedly, His rod was removed and His smile again bestowed. There is much in Kings, Chronicles, and Jeremiah that is most pertinent for us today. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear (2 Chron. 7:14). A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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April, 1933

### **Christian Perfection**

Let me first restate the four principal points which occupied us this morning. First, there is an evangelical perfection in contrast from that absolute perfection which the law demands, God in His grace accepting from His people (through Christ) sincere obedience of the heart: that genuine desire and sincere effort to please Him in all things. Second, relative perfection in contrast from absolute: this is what distinguishes the Christian from the non-Christian. Third, perfection of parts, that is, the adding of one grace to another, so that a well-rounded Christian character and conduct is developed. Fourth, perfection of degrees, that is, growth from spiritual baby hood to youth, and from youth to full maturity. It is after the third and fourth we should daily and prayerfully strive.

By way of application, let me point out, first, that the Christian ministry has been appointed by God for “the perfecting” of His saints: see Ephesians 4:11, 12. God sends His servants that you may be instructed, nourished, sanctified. “Night and day” Paul “prayed exceedingly” that he should come unto the Thessalonian Christians, and this that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1 Thess. 3:10): this is the yearning of every true servant of Christ's. Second, our improvement of this means, the response which God requires His people to make unto the ministry of His servants: “As ye have received of us *how* ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more” (1 Thess. 4:1): may this be true of you. Third, nothing short of this should be our aim and diligent endeavor, that you may “stand perfect and complete in all the will of God” (Col. 4:12).

## *I. Reasons Why We Must Be Perfect.*

That is, not only sincere, with a heart desiring to and seeking after the glory of God, not only having all the spiritual parts of a Christian, and striving after the highest possible growth, but that we may actually attain unto all that is possible for us in Christ, in this life. First, we have to do with a perfect God, and therefore we should seek perfection of character and conduct: “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in Heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). The main reason why God has been pleased to make known His attributes, to reveal unto us His perfections, is that we should take them for our copy. Second, a perfect standard is set before us, and God will not lower it. To Abraham He said, “Walk before Me, and be thou perfect” (Gen. 17:1). Abraham is the father of us all (Rom. 4:16, Gal. 3:7), therefore what God says to him, He also says to us. Third, we have a perfect rule to regulate us: see 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Those verses show that the strictness of the law is embodied in the Gospel. The high standard which God has set up under the old covenant, has not been lowered under the new covenant. The exhortations of the New Testament are but so many explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments. Fourth, we have a perfect and all-sufficient Redeemer to rely upon: Colossians 2:9. There is everything in Christ which is needed by us, and all that is in Him we may appropriate. God has not only given Christ *for* us, but He has given Him *to* us. *Christ Himself* is ours: O that the Holy Spirit may teach us how to draw from His infinite fullness.

## *II. Motives to Stimulate.*

First, all that we lost in Adam should be found again in Christ, or we do not honour Him. The last Adam is far more able to save than the first Adam was to destroy: Romans 5:17—yet that “abundance of grace” has to be diligently sought; it is not given to the lazy and halfhearted. O that the Spirit may deeply impress each of our hearts with the fact that the more we “grow up in Him in *all* things,” the more Christ is glorified through us.

Second, we *pray* for perfection (at least, I hope we do) and therefore, should strive *after* it with all our might, otherwise our prayers are but a pretense. True prayer is a solemn binding of ourselves to use the means that we may obtain the blessings which we ask: if this be not the intention of our hearts, then our prayer is merely empty words. When we truly ask God to make us more holy, we pledge our selves to use every means which makes for holiness, and strive our utmost to be holy. Prayer was never designed to be a substitute for diligent effort. Therefore if we are praying for the highest perfection attainable in this life we must strive after it.

Third, we should remind ourselves more frequently of what we lose when we slacken in our efforts after spiritual growth. All around us we behold illustrations of the fact that God has closely linked together sin and misery; so also has He inseparably connected holiness and true happiness. Therefore we should consider how much we miss when we slacken in our efforts after Christian perfection. It is those who take Christ's yoke upon them that find rest unto their souls; it is those who walk closest with Him that enter most into His joy. Not only so, but they who live a holy and happy life have a triumphant exit from this world: Psalm 37:37. Balaam said he wished that he might die the death of the righteous, but he was unwilling to live the life of the righteous. If our daily lives be right with God He will look after us in

death: this thought is also brought out in 2 Peter 1:11, which supplies the climax to the whole of that passage.

### *III. Means to Help.*

First, make sure that a Divine work of grace has begun in you; and, my friends, we cannot be too sure, nor be too diligent in the duty of self-examination. But there must be life before there can be growth: it is no use trying to grow if you do not have spiritual life. If you are in doubt, get alone with God and earnestly beseech Him to begin a good work in you. We must definitely choose God for our portion before we can cleave to and serve Him. Just as a young man selects his vocation or calling, and later chooses the woman to be his wife, so the Christian must definitely choose God. The enjoyment of God, the service of God, the pleasing of God, must become the soul's portion for time and eternity; but we cannot cleave unto God, walk with Him, or go on with Him, until we first take Him for our portion. David said, "The Lord is my portion."

Second, give special attention to the radical graces. Just as in our physical bodies there are some organs and members more vital than others, playing a larger part in determining whether we are well or sick, weak or strong, so there are certain graces in the Christian character which are more vital and radical than others. What these are is intimated in 1 Corinthians 13:13: faith, hope, and love. Let us be especially concerned to have a strong faith, a lively hope, and a fervent love. Remember that word of the Lord to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:23: they were very careful about minor things, most punctilious about washing their hands, so particular they would not eat if the shadow of a Gentile even crossed their path. But God is not found in such things, neither is the spiritual life promoted by them. Give your attention to that which is vital and fundamental.

Third, seek grace to appropriate Philippians 4:13, and turn it into earnest prayer: "I can do *all* things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Unbelief says, I cannot; previous failures say, I cannot; past experience says, I cannot; the example of fellow-Christians says, I cannot; Satan tells me, I cannot. But faith says, I "*can* do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me": turn that statement into believing, fervent, persistent prayer. Count upon God making it good. Fourth, remind yourself frequently that failure to strive hard and constantly after perfection dishonours Christ. O that the love of Christ may constrain us, that gratitude to Him will compel us to seek a closer conformity unto Him. The more I am like Him, the more I honour Him; the less I am like Him, the more I dishonour Him. We must realize this if our hearts are to be stirred up unto renewed efforts after perfection.

### *IV. Tests.*

Here there are two extremes to guard against. On the one hand, the workings of pride, assuming that I have made more progress than is really the case. On the other hand (and to a genuine Christian, this danger is just as real), the workings of unbelief, a mock humility denying that I *have* made true progress. Now every real Christian should be anxious to know what measure of growth he has attained unto. You know how it is with growing children: how anxious they are to test themselves. They make a mark on the wall to register their height, and in a month's time see whether they have gone beyond it: so it should be with us

spiritually. I am going to mention five things by which we should test ourselves concerning our growth.

First, increasing deadness to the world. The closer we approximate to Christian perfection, the deader will our hearts be unto the world. The more fully we are conformed unto the image of Christ, the less power will the world have to attract us. When I say that, I refer to something more than its amusements and grosser sins; I mean also its pretty things. One of the marks of a child is to value a thing not according to its worth and usefulness, but according to its attractiveness to the eye. There are many forms of worldliness: Isaiah 3:22 warns against “changeable suits of apparel”—such savors of pride; it is an unnecessary expense; and, it is a denial of our strangership.

The more we are really growing in grace the less shall we be attracted by such baubles, and the more attention shall we give to the adorning of our souls. One half of practical godliness is a dying unto the world; the other half is a living unto God: the mortification of self-love, and the strengthening of love to God. “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Gal. 6:14)—that is the language of a perfect Christian, that is the experience of a mature saint: dead to the world. It no longer has any attraction for him and no power over him.

Second, increasing dissatisfaction with our present attainments. Instead of being pleased with and proud of the progress he has made, the growing Christian increasingly mourns over the littleness of it, groans daily because of his sinful failures, and is burdened over his lack of conformity to Christ. Instead of self-complacency for having attained unto this or that, there is a realization that “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Josh. 13:1). The nearer I come to real Christian perfection, the more imperfect I feel myself to be. Therefore, dear friends, the measure of spiritual growth you have made during the past year is the extent to which you have grown out of love with yourself.

Third, increasingly being moved by love rather than by fear. The weak and immature Christian is most obedient when he is most in fear of punishment from God—either fear of His law or fear of His chastisement. But the mature Christian, he who has grown in grace, is moved more by the love of God and love to God: this is what regulates his actions: “For the love of Christ constraineth us” (2 Cor. 5:14). The extent to which we have grown spiritually during the last twelve months may be gauged by the measure in which our conduct is now regulated by love to Christ.

Fourth, increasing humility. Where there is real and deep humility, one sees more quickly and is more concerned about his own defects than those of his fellow Christians. A proud man is quick to note the faults of other people, but it takes an humble man to recognize and acknowledge his own. A babe in Christ is far more likely to be proud of his spiritual attainment than is a mature Christian: the latter is filled with self-abhorrence. Thus, increasing holiness means increasing self-loathing.

Fifth, increasing deliverance from childishness. I believe the analogy holds good at every point between the natural and the spiritual. Let me name one or two points of resemblance. First, touchiness characterizes an infant: a little child will cry over every trifle, but as he gets older he outgrows that. The same holds good spiritually: alas, that such growth does not always keep pace with the added years. Oftentimes one

who has been a Christian for twenty years has really grown less than one who is only five years old spiritually. Where there is growth, one is less sensitive of being hurt over trifles.

Second, a child is regulated very largely by his senses, rather than by his reason. Take food as an example: if something looks nice, tastes nice, smells nice, the child wants it, whether or not it is good for him—he is regulated by his senses. But as he grows older he learns that some things which look and smell good are injurious, and so he learns to leave them alone. So it is spiritually: a developed Christian is regulated by his judgment rather than by his senses.

Third, a child is incapable of helping others very much: it is always needing attention itself. But as the child grows older it increases in usefulness: it becomes able to help mother in the home, and later on to do other things in the world. So it should be spiritually. That Christian who is all the time needing attention and help from others is not growing; he is only a spiritual babe.

Finally, a child is always getting into mischief or trouble, constantly doing something or other which it ought not, so that it is not safe to allow it to be long out of sight. But as it grows older, if it be properly trained, it grows out of that. Now, my friends, honestly measure yourselves by these tests.

In closing, let me say, praise God for any real growth that you can see has been wrought in you: to Him alone belongs all the glory. Strive earnestly after further growth, avoiding all things which hinder and retard it, making a diligent use of all the means of grace which God has appointed for the promotion of the same.

(An address [revised] given by the editor in his home to a little company last June.) A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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by Arthur W. Pink

April, 1933

### Trusting God

Of himself the Christian can no more regulate his faith than he could originate it: only He who imparted it, can call it forth into action. This is recognized by few today. Even in those little groups where it is owned that faith is the gift of God (Eph. 2:8, 9; Phil. 1:29), the majority appear to think it lies within their own power to exercise this spiritual grace. Even when it is allowed that a spiritually dead soul cannot believe in a spiritual way, it is commonly supposed that only an effort of will is required in order for the living saint to lay hold of God's promises. Not so. It was to His regenerated disciples the Lord Jesus said "without Me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5). In keeping with this, the Apostle Paul declared, "to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not" (Rom. 7:18).

But why proclaim and press so discouraging a thing; will not God's children be disheartened thereby? First, because it is the truth, and the Truth doeth "good" (not evil) to them that walk uprightly (Micah 2:7). Second, to counteract the haughty, independent, self-reliant spirit of the day: anything that humbles the heart is salutary. Third, to emphasize the Christian's entire dependence upon God: not "that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves" (2 Cor. 3:5): if we are incapable of so much as "thinking" a good thought of ourselves, how much less can we initiate a good work!

Yet while the Divine Giver of faith can alone regulate and stimulate it, nevertheless He is pleased to use means in so doing. One of these means is the exhortations of His own blessed Word. Such an exhortation we find in Psalm 62:8, "Trust in Him at all times: ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a

refuge for us.” But if fallen man and quickened saint be alike incapable of doing so, is not God mocking us by bidding us to “trust in Him at all times”? Far be it from the puny creature to blasphemously charge the Allwise with foolishness. Better to say with the Psalmist, in another connection, “such things are too wonderful for me,” than to call them into question, much less deride them. In this case, however, a solution may be given: it is both the duty and the privilege of the Christian to beg God to work in and through him that which He requireth.

“Trust in Him at all times.” And why not? Circumstances fluctuate, we ourselves vary, but *He* is immutable: “I am the Lord, I change not” (Mal. 3:6). Blessed, assuring, comforting declaration. If God were fickle and unreliable faith would be without any foundation to rest upon; but because He is “the Same yesterday and today and forever,” He may be safely confided in. Again; His promises are ever sure, and they are given for faith to feed upon. None ever yet really truly grasped one of the Divine promises and found it to fail him. Then why should we not “trust in Him at all times”? It is for our own peace and good that we do so; it is our own great loss and misery if we do not.

Why does not the Christian trust in the Lord at “all times”? Because the root of unbelief still indwells him. Not yet is sin eradicated from our being. The “flesh” opposes the “spirit” every step of our journey toward Heaven. “Fight the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12): the repetition of that word “fight” in such a short sentence plainly intimates opposition, and a fierce contest. What, then, is the struggling Christian to do? Cry earnestly, with one of old, “Lord, I believe, help Thou mine unbelief.” But alas, so often we “make provision for the flesh to fulfill the lusts thereof” (Rom. 13:14), and then the Spirit is grieved, and His enabling power is withheld.

But what is it to “*trust* in the Lord”? A very helpful answer to this question is supplied in 2 Kings 18:30, “Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us”: the second clause explains the first; trusting the Lord is the heart's assurance that He *will surely* “deliver.” A signal illustration of His high sovereignty was this: God using a scoffing heathen to define for us the meaning of the word “trust.” How it ought to shame us, that an idolater had a clearer conception of what it means to “trust in the Lord” than many Christians have!

“To trust in God is to cast our burden on the Lord, when it is too heavy for our own shoulder (Psa. 55:22); to dwell 'in the secret place of the Most High,' when we know not where to lay our heads on earth (Psa. 91); to 'look to our Maker,' and to 'have respect to the Holy One of Israel' (Isa. 17:7); to lean on our Beloved (Song. 8:5; Isa. 36:6); to stay ourselves when sinking on the Lord our God (Isa. 26:3). In a word, trust in God is that high act or exercise of faith whereby the soul, looking upon God and casting itself on His goodness, power, promises, faithfulness, and providence, is lifted up above carnal fears and discouragement, above perplexing doubts and disquietments, either for the obtaining and continuance of that which is good, or for the preventing or removal of that which is evil.

“There are some special instances and nicks of time for trust. 1. The time *of prosperity*: when we sit under the warm beams of a meridian sun, when we wash our steps in butter and feet in oil, when the candle of the Lord shines on our tabernacle, when 'our mountain stands strong'; now, now is the time for trust, but not in our 'mountain' (for it is a mountain of ice, and may soon dissolve), *but in our God*. Any gift or

blessing which comes between the heart and the Lord, is a snare and a curse.

“2. In times of *adversity*. This also is a seasonal time for trust: when we have no bread to eat, but that of 'carefulness'; nor wine to drink, but that of 'affliction' and 'astonishment'; no, nor water either, but that of our tears. Now is the time, not for our over-grieving, murmuring, sinking, despondency; but trusting. In a tempest, then, a believer thinks it seasonable to cast anchor upon God. Thus did good Jehosaphat: 'O our God, we know not what to do: but our eyes are upon Thee' (2 Chron. 20:12).” Thomas Lye, 1621-1684, from “Morning Exercises.”

“Trust in Him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before Him: God is a refuge for us” (Psa. 62:8). “The word 'pour' plainly signifies that the heart is full of grief, and almost afraid to empty itself before the Lord. What does He say to you? 'Come and pour out all your trouble before Me.' He is never weary with hearing the complaints of His people; therefore you should go and keep nothing back; tell Him everything that hurts you, and pour all your complaints into His merciful bosom. Make Him your Counselor and Friend: you cannot please Him better than when your hearts rely wholly upon Him. You may tell Him, if you please, you have been so foolish as to look to this friend and the other for relief, and found none; and you now come to Him, who commands you to” (Berridge).

“Trust in the Lord at *all* times”: in times of persecution, as well as toleration; in times of famine, as well as plenty; in times of sickness, as well as health; in times when called to walk alone, as well as when enjoying the fellowship of Christians; in times of spiritual darkness and distress, as well as light and joy. “Trust *in* the Lord,” not merely *about* Him — in His love, His power, His faithfulness. Trust Him when His providences frown, His rod smites, His hand removes your most cherished idol. Trust Him in the worst case you have ever been in, or can be in. The way to make a feast is to trust Him; and the way to have a continual feast, is to trust in Him at all times. The way to honour Him is to trust Him. The way to *prove* Him to be a friend that sticketh closer than a brother is to trust in Him at all times. A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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April, 1933

### Not Ashamed

“They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied” (Psa. 37:19). Of whom is this declaration made? Of all the children of God? No, indeed. Only of those who are truly “upright” (v. 18) in their hearts and ways. If the reader will look up and carefully weigh Job 1:1, Psalm 37:37, Proverbs 14:11; 15:8; 29:27, it should at once be seen that the “upright” are they who walk with God, are in subjection to God, and live only to the glory of God. The “upright” are contrasted from those whose hearts are “divided” (Hosea 10:2)—half in Heaven, and half in the world; half occupied with God, half wrapped in self; and with real Christians who are in a backslidden state.

Now Psalm 37:19 plainly affirms that the “upright” shall not be ashamed in the evil time. And why? Because God is showing Himself strong on their behalf (2 Chron. 16:9), and doing for them what He is not doing for many others who bear His name. No good things do they lack (Psa. 84:11). Having sought *first* God's kingdom and righteousness (Matt. 6:33), their needs are being freely and abundantly met. An “evil time” has now come upon this perishing world, and we are acquainted with quite a number who are “*not* ashamed,” and who can joyfully exclaim “The Lord is my Helper.” On the other hand, we are acquainted with not a few real Christians who have every cause *to be* “ashamed,” for their present situation brings no glory unto God.

In an “evil time” like this, the lines ought to be so clearly drawn that even the world can discern “between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not” (Mal. 3:18). “The young lions do lack, and suffer

hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing” (Psa. 34:10). Now let us ask our readers some plain questions. A few years back when “times” were “good” and money was plentiful, were you “seeking the Lord” when you bought a car for the pleasure of your family? Had you *His* glory in view when you purchased an electric sweeper, electric washer, electric refrigerator? You wish now that you had in cash the money you then put into such extravagances. Yes, so does the worldling. But have you confessed unto God the *sin* of such extravagance?

And what of the silk stockings, the “changeable suits of apparel” (Isa. 3:22); and the many other luxuries which the worldlings were squandering their money upon? What too of being conformed unto the world in its wicked fashions: the “bobbed” hair, the short skirts, the sleeveless waists? “Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap” (Gal. 6:7). Having sown to the flesh, why think it strange if you are now reaping “corruption”? Perhaps some answer, But I was liberal in giving to the Lord's cause in those days. Are you sure it was the Lord's cause? Was the aiding in the erection of a costly “church house,” which still has a heavy *debt* upon it, “the Lord's cause”?

Is there no remedy? Yes, thank God, there is. “If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sins, and will heal their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). Ah, notice carefully what is said in the first clause: it is not “if the people,” but “if *My* people shall humble themselves.” How many Christians are genuinely surprised that we have not already witnessed a marked change on the part of the masses around us. But they need not be surprised: the “hard times” will make no impression for good on the multitudes until *God's own people* humble *themselves* before Him! There is no need for the King of Great Britain or the President of the U.S.A. to appoint a day for national humiliation, fasting and prayer, until Christians first get right with God.

What is meant by God's people “*humbling* themselves?” This: getting down on their knees before God, and owning with shame-facedness the fleshly and worldly manner in which they lived during the years of plenty; truly repenting for and sorrowfully confessing their covetousness, their carnality, their wastefulness. Then there has to be a sincere forsaking in full purpose of heart any continuance or repetition of their past Christ-dishonouring ways. Coupled with this must be the *exercise of faith*: that a merciful God will hear the penitent sobbings of a contrite heart, that He will graciously forgive, that He will blot out even the *effects* of their sins, and now “heal their land”—their present case and circumstances. Not only must the four conditions of 2 Chronicles 7:14 be met, but the three closing promises of it must be trustfully appropriated and earnestly and persistently pleaded before God. Reader, let not the Devil put you off by saying that *you* were not guilty of such extravagance as were many of your neighbors; for most probably you *were* proportionately, and according to your station in life no more self-denying or thrifty than they. May the Lord search each of our hearts, quicken our memories, and convict our consciences.  
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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1933

### Waiting at Wisdom's Gates

“Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors” (Prov. 8:34). In the Scriptures of truth no more than two classes of people are declared to be in the world. The one class is called “the blessed of the Lord,” and the other “the cursed of the Lord,” or “the people of God's curse.” This latter class contains all the “vessels of wrath fitted to destruction”; all “the generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet are not washed from their filthiness”; all the “generation of vipers that cannot escape the damnation of hell”; in short, all “whose names are not written in the Lamb's book of life,” who are not among those whom Jesus has “redeemed unto God out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” The former class, to which the characters spoken of in the text belong, contains all who are “chosen by God the Father in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they should be holy and without blame before Him in love”; all whom He “predestinated to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace wherein He hath made them accepted in the Beloved; in whom they have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:3-7); all whom the Lord the Spirit “quickens into spiritual and eternal life” (Eph. 2:1); and all to whom Jehovah says, “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer. 31:3). Of both these classes, or of the characters which make up these two distinct families, the Holy Spirit has given in His Word plain and striking descriptions. He has drawn their likenesses with His Divine and unerring hand, and has clearly separated the sheep from the goats, “the chaff from the wheat,” and “the precious from the vile.”

In the text we have exhibited to us the portrait of a blessed character, an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ. His features are drawn from the life by the Spirit of life with the pencil of Divine Truth, and happy are we if we can trace any of these features in the fleshy tables of our hearts, and discover any conformity to the image of Jesus in our souls. May it be our happiness to feel that we are of the “blessed of the Lord,” while attending to the description of the blessed man of whom Wisdom speaks. May “the light of life” shine upon the Word, and shine into our hearts, that although we may only see through a glass darkly, we may be enabled to hear the still small voice of the Lord saying to our souls, “Unto you is the word (and power) of this salvation sent.”

“Blessed is the man that heareth *Me*, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors.” I. The first thing to be attended to in endeavoring to enter into these words, is to understand *who is the speaker*. By the context we find that it is one whose name is “Wisdom,” one who is holy, omniscient, omnipotent, and eternal; one who was “before all things, and by whom all things consist”; who, from everlasting, “from the beginning, or ever the earth was, was with the Lord, as one brought up by Him; who was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in the habitable parts of His earth, and having His delights with, or His affections set upon, the sons of men.” In short, the speaker in my text is clearly the same with Him of whom it is written, “Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given: and the government shall be upon His shoulder: and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isa. 9:6): “Christ, the power of God and the Wisdom of God unto them which are called both Jews and Greeks” (1 Cor. 1:24). Now this Divine, almighty, and all-wise Person is the promised Prophet of whom Moses wrote—Jehovah the Redeemer, who teaches those whom He calls to profit, and leads them in the way wherein they should go. He is here exhibited to us as a wise and affectionate mother, in which character He was well known to His people (Isa. 49:15; 66:13), giving instruction to her children, and encouraging them to be “patient continuance in well-doing.” I shall therefore, throughout this discourse, use the personal pronoun feminine, when referring to Immanuel Jesus, who says to all the elect family, “Hearken unto Me, ye children; for blessed are they that keep My ways, Hear instruction and be wise, and refuse it not. Blessed is the man that heareth Me, watching daily at My gates, waiting at the posts of My doors.”

By none but those who esteem themselves to be “fools” and “simple ones” is the teaching of Wisdom really valued. The wise and prudent of this world, the self-sufficient Pharisees, the unhumiliated professor of the Gospel, agree in despising and counting it as a thing of nought. But Wisdom makes all her blessed children to know and feel their great need of her Divine instruction; she causes them to hear her voice, and to turn at her reproof; she pours out her Spirit unto them, and makes known to them her words (Prov. 1:23); the entrance (or opening) of which giveth light and understanding to the simple (Psa. 119:130). But does Wisdom speak with an audible voice? Can the ears of the body catch the sound, and the natural understanding comprehend her words? No! Wisdom's voice is audible only to the new creature, which hears it in the impressions that she makes upon the heart, and in the mysterious leadings of her providence. It is “with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.” “When Thou saidest, Seek ye My face, *my heart said* unto Thee, Thy face, Lord, will I seek.” But when may a man be said to have heard the voice of Wisdom? When does he give evidence of having received her Divine impressions, her heavenly and powerful operations, through the Spirit, in his heart? When a man is made to feel that he is in the hand of the holy, just, and sin-avenging Jehovah, against

whom he has sinned; when his transgressions and iniquities are set before him in the light of God's countenance; when he feels himself to be justly condemned (by the law which he has broken) to the second death, and to the endurance of the wrath of God for ever and ever.

When the depravity, deceitfulness, and desperate wickedness of his heart is discovered to him, and he is left to cry in the bitterness of his soul, "Woe is me, for I am undone; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts"; when, like the leper, he covers his lip, and goes forth crying, "Unclean, unclean," and putteth his mouth in the dust, if so be, there may be hope; when like Hezekiah, he turns his face to the wall, and weeps sore in secret before the Lord; when a sense of his darkness, ignorance, impotency, and unprofitableness, makes him cry "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me"; when he finds all human cisterns to be broken, and that vain is the help of man; when he feels that he is shut up and cannot come forth; when a strong conviction of the ability of Jesus to save and heal him is in his heart, and he cries unto Him to deliver him from going down to the pit; when nothing short of the Lord the Spirit's application of the love, blood, and righteousness of Jesus to his heart and conscience will satisfy him; and the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon him, enabling him to pour out his soul before God, to acknowledge the iniquity of his transgression, to sue for mercy, to beg for pardon, teaching, wisdom, light, and power, and to crave for one smile, one look of love, one word from Christ's lips, more than for his necessary food. I say, when he has experienced these things, he has heard more than the voice of natural conscience; more than the word of man; more than the letter of the oracles of truth. He has heard the voice of the Lord, which is powerful and full of majesty, that breaketh the cedars in Lebanon, and maketh the hinds to calve. As one who was dead and in his grave, he has heard the voice of the Son of God, and has been quickened by Him (John 5:25). He has heard the words of Wisdom: her voice has sounded in his soul, and has produced this wonderful change; and to him these words now apply, "The ear that heareth the reproof of Wisdom shall abide among the wise." Happy, saith Wisdom, is the man that is in such a state; yea, "Blessed is the man that heareth Me."

Again. When he that hath climbed in over the wall, that has taken up a profession of religion without feeling its power, whose religion has hitherto been "feeding upon ashes," and who has never known the strait gate and narrow way, is awakened by the solemn feeling that "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit, and that except a man be born from above, he cannot see or enter into the kingdom of God"; when the sluggard awakens from his slumber, and the man that was asleep upon the top of the mast has his eyes opened to see his danger, and his heart and mouth opened to implore assistance, when the Spirit Jehovah has blown upon the breast, and all its glory withers away; when natural knowledge of Divine truth, formal prayer, mock spirituality, feigned love, and presumptuous confidence become "a heap and desperate sorrow"; when examining himself whether he be in the faith, and trying himself by the test of God's Word, his faith is found to stand not in the power of God, but in the wisdom of man, his hope to be a false one, his love only fleshly and excited feelings, his zeal a spark from the fire of his own kindling, his wisdom folly; when he sees Tekel written upon his forehead and he trembles lest he should be lost after all his profession; when he cannot find that God has begun a good work in him, and yet lifts up his voice and entreats the Lord to have mercy upon him, and lead him in the way everlasting; when his spirit is broken with grief and sorrow, his strength has failed him and is gone, his beauty is turned into corruption, his sweet smell becomes a stink, and his girdle a rent; when, under

these feelings, he is constrained to sit alone and keep silence, to separate from those he once walked with, and to esteem those to be the excellent of the earth that he once despised; when he feels the vanity of all teaching but Divine teaching, the folly of all wisdom which comes not from “the Spirit of Wisdom,” and the abomination of all religion that is not planted in the heart by God's own hand; when he besieges the throne of grace with fervent petitions that he may not go on deceiving and being deceived, but that he may know the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent; that he may have godly sorrow bestowed upon him, to work in his soul repentance not to be repented of; and that he may have the fear of God, which is the beginning of wisdom, put into his heart, with faith, hope, and love, a tender conscience, godly sincerity, truth, uprightness, meekness, and humility. *Then* he may be said to have heard the still small voice of Wisdom, to have heard her rod, and who hath appointed it. He has then the features of a “blessed” man; “Blessed is the man that heareth Me.”

But there are other ways in which the blessed man hears the voice of Wisdom. “My people,” saith the Lord, “are bent to backsliding.” And there is no blessed man who is not sensible of the truth of this declaration. Wisdom speaks to her backsliding children, and makes them know that they have committed two evils: in forsaking her, the fountain of living waters, and hewing out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water. Thus, when he who has backslidden in heart from Wisdom's ways, who has got entangled in the snares of his sinful heart, the world that lies in wickedness and the father of lies; when he who has “mingled himself among the people,” and has become as “a cake not turned,” unsavory to the world, and burdensome to the church, lukewarm, carnal, and careless; when he to whom neither heavenly things nor earthly things afford satisfaction; when he who has not heart for the former, and is condemned and unhappy in the latter; when (I say) such a one begins to feel the error of his way, to bemoan himself, to look upwards, and confess his sin to the Lord; to loathe himself and to cry “Turn Thou me, and I shall be turned”; to long for the snare in which he is held to be broken, to be enabled once more to feel the Lord to be nigh; to be permitted to draw near unto Him without alarm, weariness, or aversion; to walk in His ways, to rejoice in His smiles, and to tremble at His frowns; to delight himself in God, to seek His glory; when he “accepts the punishment of his iniquity,” “smarts under his wounds,” groans under his hardness, roars like a bear, and mourns sore like a dove; when he is brought to lie in the dust, covered with shame, and is sometimes a little cheered by a word of encouragement for a moment resting upon his drooping spirit, producing softness, contrition, self-abasement, and greater desire to be permitted to touch the hem of Wisdom's garment; when his conscience no longer lets him do violence to it without striking “a dart through his liver,” and every backward step adds “grief to his sorrow”; when he is constrained to attend to and to obey the commands that are laid upon his heart, although it mortifies his pride and debases him in the sight of man so to do; when, though his prayer seems to be shut out from the Lord, and a cloud is upon the Throne of Grace, he yet calls, cries, and shouts, nor can give Wisdom any rest until she hears and answers; *then* he hears her voice, and Wisdom, sooner or later, makes him feel that “blessed is the man that heareth” her.

Thus, then, Wisdom's voice is heard in conviction of sin, in the breaking down and rooting up of false religion, and in the convincing of the backslider that his ways are crooked and bitter. But has she no voice to declare where are her footsteps in providence, and her ways in love, mercy, grace, and faithfulness? Has this gentle, affectionate, and wise mother no kind words for her children, no promises, no consolations for her burdened and mourning family? She has; she does not use the rod alone; she does not only wound, kill,

and bring down; she has words of healing, words of restoring, words of deliverance, words of gracious instruction, of tender faithfulness. In providential trials she often causes her blessed children to feel and confess that there was a needs-be for the affliction. She calls them to her feet, to make known their wants, and puts words into their hearts that they may plead with her and prevail. The blessed Spirit enlightens their eyes to see her smiles in the parting of the clouds, and sometimes to discern her good will where, to reason, there is no trace of it. Many have found, and still find, that seasons of temporal calamity are made by Wisdom, the way of entrance to her chambers, and the way of approach to her bosom. Greater nearness to her, more dependence upon her almighty arm, more confidence in her mercy and goodness, a deeper sense of her power to deliver, and of the fullness of her blessed words, are more frequently found in adversity than were felt in prosperity. Something secret, but strong, keeps the blessed man looking to his gentle mother for help and protection, something causes him to take shelter under her outspread wings; and although unbelief would sink him with despondency, something is communicated to him which holds him up, and constrains him to say, "I will trust Thee, though Thou slay me." He believes that he will be extricated from his difficulty, but how he cannot tell. He feels that he cannot fall, but he sees not how he can stand. He believes that assistance will be afforded but he cannot guess from what quarter it will come. Here he often hangs, like a balance blown upon by the winds; sometimes the scale of faith and hope is the more weighty, and sometimes that of fear and doubt. And thus he is kept, till Wisdom suddenly comes to her temple, and causes her voice to be heard in the deliverance which she brings.

Wisdom can speak by an angel; by the ravens and brook; by a prophet; by fire from Heaven; by preserving her children unhurt in the flames; by shutting the mouths of the lions; by slaying Goliath by the hand of a stripling, armed with a sling and a stone; by multiplying the loaves and fishes; by restoring the sick child to health; by opening the eyes of the blind, making the lame man to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. Wisdom never wants for means, nor can any deafness prevent her voice from being heard when she deigns to speak. Sweet is her voice to those who hear it; powerful is her arm unto those in whose behalf it is revealed; loving is her heart to those that lie near her bosom; and full of consolation are her breasts to those whom she causes to seek and be satisfied therewith. Wisdom's voice, then, drives fear away and brings comfort and thankfulness, in providential things; and does it not effect the same in spiritual concerns? Yes; here too she speaks; here is she heard. When bowed down under an accumulation of guilt, sin, and misery, and the soul is faint within, because Wisdom has so long kept silence, and has seemed inattentive to the groaning and sighing of the prisoner; when fears of destruction are many, and the cable is strained to the utmost, and seems just ready to snap and sever the vessel from the anchor by which it is held; then does Wisdom speak, then her "fear not" is heard; then does she sprinkle her peace-speaking blood upon the guilty conscience, or give power to the faint, to lay hold upon some merciful declaration, gracious invitation, or cheering promise. She speaks away all the guilt, and fills the soul with peace and joy in believing, or helps it with a little help, and strengthens it with a little strength, as she sees good. To some she speaks with more, and to some with less power. Some hear her voice of love and mercy frequently and clearly, and some rarely and faintly. But *all* her children *do* hear her voice, and experience, in measure and degree, the blessedness of her words to the weary, heavy-laden, destitute, guilty, and forlorn. Some hear it on their knees, and some when walking by the way and conversing or meditating on the things pertaining to salvation. Some hear it under the preached Word, and some in reading the Word. Some hear it in a text applied verbatim, and some in the substance of a text gradually distilling its dew upon the soul. But in whatever degree or in whatever way Wisdom's voice is heard, the like effects are produced, the like spices flow out; sensible relief, grace, mercy, and goodness are felt, which lead the soul

to repentance; brokenness of heart, humility, and abasement of self are found; the sinner is brought low, and the Savior is exalted; the creature lies in the dust, and the Creator fills the throne; unbelief is silenced, and faith is heard; pride is stained, and a meek and lowly spirit is put on; fear and torment are cast out, and love is shed abroad in the heart; Christ is All and in all, and the creature is nothing in nothing. O blessed is the man that hears this voice, that is come to the blood of sprinkling, which speaketh better things than that of Abel; for says Wisdom, "Blessed is the man that heareth Me." None but the blessed long to hear this voice; they alone hear Wisdom speaking, in reproofs and pardon, in chastisement and mercy, in darkness and in light, in sorrow and in consolation, in warnings and in promises, in death and in life. (Completed in the next issue).

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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May, 1933

### **Deliverance from Prison**

*“Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name”* (Psa. 142.7). It is not certain that David composed this Psalm in the Cave of Adullam, when he had fled from Achish king of Gath, or in the cave of Engedi, when he had taken refuge from the wrath of Saul (1 Sam. 22:1, 2 and 24:1-3). But this is a matter of very little consequence to us; as it is the state of his soul we want to come at, in order to render the subject profitable to the Lord's tempted, tried, and harassed people, whose souls are often in such a state of captivity as obliges them to cry with the Psalmist *“Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name.”* Let us, then, notice the threefold state of imprisonment of a spiritual nature which the Scriptures speak of, and with which all God's elected, redeemed, and regenerated people, are, more or less acquainted.

First, our attention is directed to that condition of thralldom we are all in by nature; namely, *“the pit wherein is no water”* (Zech. 9:11), under sin's dark dominion (Rom. 3:9), under the law and subject to its curse; as the Apostle observes, *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them”* (Gal. 3:10). And, *“what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God”* (Rom. 3:19). Thus men are shut up under the law, in unbelief, led captive by the Devil at his will, are wholly under the power and dominion of sin and Satan; for he is the strong man armed, that has the possession of the heart, and keepeth his house in peace. And yet men fancy they are at liberty; or, if bound at all, that it is so slightly,

they can at any time break their chains, open the prison doors, and let themselves out. Awful delusion! But the child of God made sensible of his imprisoned state, does not think and speak thus, but, with the Psalmist, he confesses his bondage, sighs and groans under it, and cries unto the Lord, who alone can set his soul at liberty, and redeem his life from destruction.

We now come to notice the *second* state of imprisonment; which is, the condition of soul of a sinner, made sensible of his undone, wretched, and miserable state, arising from the law having come with power to his heart in the hand of its Divine Author by which he has knowledge of sin, and the wrath and curse of God due to him as a vile offender; his soul, which was previously dead in sins, and lay unconsciously imprisoned, is now quickened by the eternal Spirit, and feels sin a burden; the hand of God lies upon him, pressing him sore; he is shut up under the law, and cannot come forth, has no soundness in his flesh, because of a sense of God's anger; neither is there any rest in his bones, because of his iniquities, for they are gone over his head as a heavy burden, too heavy for him to bear; he is troubled and bowed down greatly, seeing others walk at large, and, mourning his own lonely state, longs for deliverance. But he can no more come out of this low dungeon, this horrible pit, this mire and clay, of himself, by his own strength or exertions, than he can create a world; and the more he struggles to break off his chains, and open the prison doors, and come out by his legal works, the more he gets entangled, and the deeper he sinks in the pit, for he finds that the law demands perfect and perpetual obedience, is inflexible, and will not abate the least mite. Therefore, the Lord alone can bring a soul out of prison and set it at liberty; hence we read that "God setteth the solitary in families: He bringeth out those which are bound with chains: but the rebellious dwelleth in a dry land" (Psa. 68:6).

This is alone of His free favour, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, by means of the Gospel of His grace, which "is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth" (Rom. 1:16). And the man who has thus been imprisoned and delivered, knows when, by whom, and by what means he was brought out. He knows that it is owing to the love of God the Father, as the *moving* cause; and to the Lord Jesus Christ, as the sinner's Surety, in His obedience, death and resurrection, as the *procuring* cause, by whose doing and dying the law is magnified and made honourable, and the justice of God completely satisfied: therefore the poor prisoner is sent out of the pit wherein is no water, by virtue of the blood of the covenant: the lawful captive is delivered, and the prey taken from the terrible one; he is ransomed from Hell, and delivered from going down into the pit of endless misery. He knows, too, that it is owing to the power and grace of God the Spirit as the efficient cause, who has shed abroad the love of God in his heart, brought near the blood, righteousness, and salvation of Christ, and testified of the validity and efficacy of His blood to pardon, His righteousness to justify, and of His power to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by Him; having wrought faith in his heart to look to, and confide in the merits of Christ. Nor can he ever forget the mercy of God to him, a lost and helpless sinner, who was just ready to perish, when the great trumpet of love, pardon, and salvation was blown in his heart by the almighty Spirit, and his soul set at sweet and happy liberty thereby from the yoke of bondage, freed from Satan's heavy chain, and brought out of the prison house into the glorious liberty of the children of God, to hold converse and communion with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ by an unction from the Holy One.

Such distinguishing goodness and mercy, known and felt in the soul, are sure to produce gratitude, praise, and thanksgiving unto the Eternal Three, Father, Son and Holy Spirit: and in this consists the very essence

of religion: for if we know nothing of bondage, we know nothing of spiritual liberty, if we have never felt our imprisoned state, we never knew what it was to be brought out of prison. Some, however, talk of the great joy they feel, but we never hear of the sorrow that they have had; of great liberty, but nothing do we hear of their imprisonment. They begin at the wrong end at first, who talk about their liberty before experiencing bondage; of the joy of God's salvation before their sorrow, from a sense of condemnation; of the pleasures of Heaven before they have felt the pains of Hell. But here, lest any should be wounded whom God would not have wounded, we would observe that there are different degrees of imprisonment. While we maintain that all God's children know what it is to be in prison of soul, yet all are not alike in prison, some being more closely confined, feeling greater darkness and horror, and being more roughly treated, as it were; while others experience milder treatment, and are not so long confined. Because some are three months in prison, it does not follow that all should lie there so long; or that because the chain of some is peculiarly heavy, and their dungeon exceedingly dark and dismal, that the chain of all should be equally galling, and their misery alike great; for, as the poet expresses,

“Some souls are fifty pieces deep,  
and some five hundred owe.”

But as the Savior saith, “But when they had nothing to pay, the creditor frankly forgave them both” (Luke 7:41, 42). God is a sovereign and has a right to do as he pleases in this matter, either to doom a sinner in sorrows sharp and long to lay, or speedily turn his gloomy night into bright sunshine; as in the case of Saul of Tarsus, who was three days in the prison of soul distress before the Lord brought him out into liberty; while those who were converted unto God on the day of Pentecost were not so long as that in soul distress; for we read, “then they that gladly received his word were baptized: and the *same day* were added unto the church” (Acts 2:41). And the Philippian jailer was not so long detained as this, before his captivity was turned; for we read that “he took them (Paul and Silas) the *same hour* of the night, and washed their stripes; and was baptized, he and all his, straightway. . .and *rejoiced*, believing in God with all his house” (Acts 16:33, 34). But whether the time of a sinner's imprisonment be long or short, we know that it is according to the appointment of God; and when He sets the souls of His people at liberty, and continues to smile upon them, they have sweet peace of mind, “rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh; but when He hides His face, then they are cast down again; as the Psalmist says, “Thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.”

This leads us to notice, more particularly, the *third* state of imprisonment; which happens when the soul that has been made clean, and brought out of prison into liberty, returns again into darkness of mind, despondency and dejection; having no access to God in prayer, no sensible enjoyment of His presence, no communion with his heavenly Father either in private supplication and reading of the Word, or in public ordinances; but he is shut up; the Word is a sealed book, yielding no consolation, but condemnation; and when he goes to the house of God it is the same, while others are blessed under the Word preached, feeling its power and sweetness and are praising God, he is cast down, goes mourning without the sun, feels nothing but the vile affections of his deceitful heart, and is fretful and rebellious when he hears others speak of the goodness of the Lord to them. Thus as a prison is a place of confinement, he finds his soul “shut up and *cannot* come forth”: for a soul in this state requires the same power that brought him out of his first imprisonment, to bring him out of this low dungeon.

And as a prison is a place of darkness, so he walks in darkness and has no light, is solitary, sighs and groans, and concludes that the mercy of God is gone forever; but now and then hope springs up, and he prays, with some degree of confidence, “Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name”: and God will hear his prayer. Although this imprisonment be long, and occasioned by his own folly, in departing from “the Fountain of living waters,” and hewing out to himself “cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water”: for the Lord has said, that if His children forsake His law, He “will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My loving kindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail” (Psa. 89:32, 33). “He heareth the poor, and despiseth not His prisoners” (Psa. 69: 33). He “looked down from the height of His sanctuary, to hear the groans of His prisoners: to loose those that are appointed to death. He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer” (Psa. 102:17-20). And the covenant promise of God the Father to Jesus Christ the Son, runs thus, “I the Lord have called Thee in righteousness, and will hold Thine hand, and will keep Thee, and give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles: To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house” (Isa. 42:6, 7). And Christ saith, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because the Lord hath sent Me to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound” (Luke 4:18).

Now the Lord must come to the prisoner and set him free, and not wait till he has let himself out of prison, and then come and assist him. O no; Jehovah Himself must do the deed; for the poor prisoner can only groan, sigh, and pray for deliverance, but cannot effect it. If David could have obtained liberty by his own exertions, why does he pray, “*Bring* my soul out of prison, that I may praise Thy name”? Observe the object of the poor prisoner in prayer to be brought out of prison; it is not merely ease and comfort to himself, but the glory of God: “that I may praise Thy name.” Thus, praise to the name of the Lord is the consequence of His delivering mercy to our souls; praise to sovereign love, atoning blood, and Almighty power, combined together, in bringing a soul out of prison.” From the Gospel Standard, 1838.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### Waiting at Wisdom's Gates

II. But another thing is said of the blessed man. He does more than hear Wisdom's voice: he watches at Wisdom's gates. "Blessed is the man that heareth Me, *watching* daily at my gates" (Prov. 8:34). And what are these gates at which the blessed man watcheth? By Wisdom's gates I understand those places where Wisdom speaks by those whom she calls her maidens--ministers called and taught by the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Christ. Among the Jews, counsels were held in the gates of the city; causes were heard and decided, and judgment was given; the oppressors were condemned, and the oppressed were delivered; property was redeemed, and contracts were entered into. So, also, in Wisdom's gates, where Wisdom presides and speaks, teaches and directs, these things spiritually, are done, and heavenly business is transacted. At her gates she assembles and gathers together her children, to speak to them and to give them good counsel. Here she reveals the secrets of their hearts; passes judgment upon what is false and evil; takes away their rotten props; drives them out of their refuges of lies; exposes the deceit of their hearts; opens them to receive the truth, and to attend unto the things that are spoken by her; brings redemption into the soul; saves it from the oppressor, from the delusions of Satan, and the accusations of conscience; and sweetly reveals her pardon and peace. Here she strengthens the weak hands, and confirms the feeble knees; comforts the distressed, satiates the longing soul; fills the empty soul with good things; opens blind eyes, unstops deaf ears, circumcises the heart; and makes the lame to leap as a hart, and the tongue of the dumb to sing. Here righteous judgment is given; a true balance is held, and right and just weights are put therein; and the Lord is known to be a God of judgments, by whom actions are weighed. These are the gates of righteousness, the gates of Wisdom; and here the righteous

resort, and here the blessed man “watches.”

Yes, he *watches*. He does not go out of form or custom, or merely to hear a fine *orator*, or to satisfy conscience. No; he *watches*. As the criminal on the gallows watches and strains his eyes, looking to the skirts of the crowd and to the distant hills, if peradventure he may see the messenger of mercy, dispatched from the king's presence with the wished-for reprieve; as the sick patient anxiously looks toward the door, in expectation of the far-famed physician; as the shipwrecked mariner watches the dim spot in the horizon, in hopes it may prove to be a sail approaching for his deliverance; as the suitor watches the face of him to whom he presents his petition, or the beggar the opening of the gate in hopes of receiving an alms; even so does the blessed man watch at Wisdom's gates. He watches for some token for good, some message of peace, some sweet consolation; some sensible and powerful manifestation of love and freedom, mercy and grace; some interpretation of his case, and unraveling of his dark and difficult experience; some light on his path, some crumbs from the bread of life, some shinings and beams from the Sun of righteousness; some instruction in righteousness, some promise of good things; some proof that *his* spots are the spots of God's children, that he is not deceived, that he is in the way of life, and that he is among the jewels of the Lord. He watches attentively, he longs earnestly, for these blessings. He goes to Wisdom's gates in hopes of hearing glad tidings; of being filled and rejoiced, of having pardon and peace sealed in his heart; of hearing Wisdom's voice, seeing her arm revealed, feeling her healing power, not to have his judgment only informed, but to have his heart affected; not to be seen of man, but to see the Lord's face and to have the light of His countenance lifted up upon him. Thus he watches at Wisdom's gates, in expectation of seeing and receiving from her hands a good and perfect gift. “Blessed is the man that *heareth* Me, that *watcheth* daily at my gates.”

The blessed man is said to attend *daily*, to hear and watch for Wisdom. Thus these blessed watchers watch daily, and wait for some hope, some comfort, some promise, some light and blessing from Wisdom. They are found at Wisdom's gates as often as they open, and they are able to come. There is no need to exhort them to go there. They require no entreaties. They are hungry and want food; needy and poor, and want to be enriched; naked, and want clothing; cold, and want to be warmed; miserable, and want to be comforted; guilty, and want to be pardoned. They do not mind walking a few miles to hear the Word, for the desire of their soul is towards it. They endure affliction, and watch continually, sometimes with more, and sometimes with less fervor. Those who are very unlike Wisdom's watching children can be kept from hearing and watching because the road is long and rough, the weather cold or damp, or because some trifling obstacle is in the way. But observe the word “my”: “that watcheth daily at My gates.” “My sheep hear My voice, and a stranger they will not follow,” saith Christ. Thus blessed hearers and blessed watchers cannot sit under a legal or dry doctrinal ministry, in which Wisdom's voice is not heard, and be satisfied therewith. Though they would feign fill their belly with the husks which the swine eat, they cannot. It will not do for them; they must have “clean provender, which hath been winnowed with the shovel and with the fan” (Isa. 30:24). They cannot sit under a dead minister who exalts the creature, and exhorts him to do what he feels he cannot do; for he has “the sentence of death” in himself, that he should not trust in himself (2 Cor. 1:9). The blessed hearers and watchers will never be content with a legal preacher, or a dry though correct letter preacher. They want power, unction, experience, interpretation of their cases, and to have the footsteps of the flock (Song. 1:8) traced out, that they may go forth their way by them. There are thousands who are very attentive and regular at their churches and chapels, are very

fond of being there early, and never miss when the doors are open, who are far from being among the number of the *blessed* hearers and watchers, for they can hear and watch like strangers, which blessed hearers and watchers cannot do. They can delight in the gates of Satan, transformed into an angel of light (2 Cor. 11:14); but blessed hearers and watchers can approve of Wisdom's gates only.

“Blessed is the man that heareth Me, that watcheth daily at My gates, that waiteth at the posts of My doors.” Here is another mark of a blessed man: he *waits* at the posts of Wisdom's *doors*. But what are those doors? A door is that which we pass through to obtain entrance into a house, chamber, or private enclosure, and is the only lawful and proper inlet to those who come in a direct and blessed way. The Lord Jesus said of Himself, “I am the door” implying that none can enter into the fold, or bond of the covenant, but through Him. They must not only have a sight of Him afar off, but in experience or nearness to and entry into Him, ere they can, as His sheep, lie down and feed in the fold of the covenant of grace, and delight themselves in God's everlasting, electing, redeeming, renewing, and preserving love. Christ is Himself the Covenant, as it is said in Isaiah 42:6; and He is one of the Divine Covenanters (Zech. 9:11). In Him are hid all the covenant stores of wisdom and knowledge, salvation and righteousness, mercy and truth, peace and life. Therefore, the soul that would enjoy these blessings must have more than a letter knowledge of them. He must handle and enjoy, taste and feast; and this he cannot do until, by the blessed Spirit, he has such a revelation of Jesus as to assure him he is “a man in Christ.”

The blessed man, that hears Wisdom, and watches at her gates, at which are laid up all manner of precious fruits (Song. 7:13), knows and feels this; he has such a savor of the preciousness which Jesus is and has in Himself, that he pants after the enjoyment thereof. He is not content to “go about Zion” and to “mark her walls and bulwarks,” as thousands are; but he wants to *find an entrance into Zion*, to be brought into the citadel of safety, and the banqueting house of love, and therefore his eyes are up unto the Lord (Psa. 123:1, 2). He is “looking unto Jesus” (Heb. 12:2), and waiting with anxiety and longing desires, in hope that He will put forth His hand, and take him in to Him, as Noah put forth his hand, and took into the ark the dove which had been fluttering over the waste of waters and drowned bodies, and could find no rest for the sole of her foot; not being able to rest on that which had destroyed so many, nor on the corruption which floated on every side. He waits and knocks also at the posts of the doors of love, mercy, and salvation. He knows what they are in the letter, and has sometimes had glimpses and rays of the Sun of righteousness darting through them into his soul. He has been very near the free enjoyment of what his soul desires, even at “the posts.” But he wants more than this: he wants to find an *entrance into* the doors, by assurance entering into him. He wants the witness of the Spirit, and the love of God shed abroad in his heart by the Holy Spirit. For these he begs and knocks, with sighs and groans, and hungerings and thirstings. Sometimes he fears the doors will never be opened to him, he is so vile and foul, unbelieving and hardhearted. He sees there is a “door of faith” (Acts 14:27) and a “door of hope” (Hosea 2:15), and hears that they are opened to waiting and troubled souls in the wilderness (Hosea 2:14). But he must have more than *hearing* these things as truths and blessed realities: he must *enjoy and enter into* them as such.

Now such a waiter has faith in Christ; but it is only like a drop of oil under the muddy water, which is struggling to rise to the top, or like a bladder or cork caught in the seaweeds and held down thereby. Though it is in its nature to rise and ascend, it cannot. He has, then, faith to believe his need of these things, and to cry to the dear Lord to open to him, to let him in. He has faith and hope sufficient to keep

him knocking and calling for admission; like a storm-beaten and shivering traveler at the door of an inn, the keeper whereof is in bed and asleep, and who, if he hears his voice, appears not inclined to rise and open to him. He waits for God to enable him to receive “the end of his faith, the salvation of his soul” (1 Peter 1:9); to convince him that he *has* “faith of the operation of God” (Col. 2:12). He cannot conclude that he has true faith, and that his is a good hope through grace (2 Thess. 2:16), till he can feel thereby assured he is elected, and born of God. False professors, who are left-hand goats and not right-hand sheep, and so never hear the voice of Wisdom, get into the full assurance of faith very easily. Nothing is more simple to them. They say, “you have *only* to believe.” But *only to believe* is as impossible to Wisdom's waiting children, as for them to grasp the whole firmament with their hands, or to lay hold upon and enter into the sun. They feel their helplessness, weakness, unbelief, darkness, and blindness. They are like wayfaring men, who, although they may perchance be in the right way, cannot be assured thereby, because all behind and before, above and around them, is thick darkness; and they know not where they are, and are afraid to proceed, or go backwards lest they should fall into a bog or pit, or over a precipice; but they call and shout, in hopes of being heard and directed in the way. They stand still, and wait and watch for the break of day, for the light to visit them.

Thus Wisdom's watching, waiting children feel what David was experiencing when he said, “Lord, hear my voice; let Thine ear be attentive to the voice of my supplications. If Thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with Thee, that Thou mayest be feared. I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait, and in His word do I hope. My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning” (Psa. 130:2-6). Now a soul in this state is a “blessed” soul. He is a wise son; an heir of God, and a joint-heir together with Christ. Though under tutors and governors until the time appointed by the Father (Gal. 4:2), yet is he a true son, and not a bastard (Heb. 12:8); although he is but at the *posts* of Wisdom's doors, holding on by only a little hope, a little strength, a little light, a something which will not let him give up watching, but which keeps him looking for the morning, for the day-star to arise in his heart (2 Peter 1:19), and the Sun of righteousness with healing in his wings (Mal. 4:2), he is manifestly, though not to himself, one of God's children; yea, though he is like the chapped ground, which, parched with the droughts of summer, cleaves into deep fissures, and can only open its many mouths, and gape for the refreshing and reviving rain. For it is the blessed Spirit who has taught him that without Jesus he can do nothing; and that has made him open his mouth wide, that He might fill it (Psa. 81:10). He may wait long, and seemingly in vain; but in the set time (Psa. 102:13) God will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground (Isa. 44:3). He will show him that He has set before him an open door, and no man can shut it (Rev. 3:8), while like Hannah, he speaks and prays only in his heart (1 Sam. 1:13). God hears the voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace (Jer. 30:5). Wisdom sees him at the posts of her doors, though he cannot see that. Wisdom observes and cares for him. Wisdom will keep him watching as long as it is good for him, but not a moment longer. There is a “set time to favour Zion,” and it cannot be hastened nor retarded. The vision, saith the Lord, is *for an appointed time*, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie. Though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry (Hab. 2:3). Those who, like Simeon, are found waiting for the consolation of Israel (Luke 2:25), like Simeon will, ere the earthly house of their tabernacle be dissolved, be blessed with holding their Savior in the arms of their faith, and will be enabled to say, “Lord, now lettest Thou (or *now* Thou lettest) Thy servant depart in peace, according to Thy word, for mine eyes have seen Thy salvation” (Luke 2:28-30).

Thus a waiting soul is a blessed soul. “Blessed *is* (not *shall be*) the man that heareth Me, that watcheth daily at My gates, that waiteth at the posts of My doors.” He *is* a saved soul, though he cannot say *my* God and *my* Savior. He is not blessed because he hears, and watches and waits; but because he is blessed, therefore a hearing, watching and waiting spirit is given him. Patience is the fruit of the Spirit, and the Spirit puts forth no fruits but in elect souls. He who groans within himself, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body (that is, who waits till he shall be brought into the full enjoyment of the redemption of his body, which is redeemed as well as his soul; or who waits, longing to be rid of his body of death and corruption; who waits, desiring to be freed from sin, and to enjoy the full fruition of the adoption of the sons of God), is a blessed man (Rom. 8:23). And so is the man who, though sorely oppressed and cast down, is not destroyed, nor bereft of hope, nor able to consent to evil, but endures temptation (James 1:12). “Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord” (Psa. 128:1). “*Blessed* are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. *Blessed* are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted, etc., etc. (Matt 5:3-12). Now in some one or more of these states all who are born of God are found; and all such though differing in the depth of their feelings and experience, are blessed persons, and hear Wisdom (not the mere words of man), nor or taken up with fine, empty oratory; not hear this or that good man, for Wisdom saith “Blessed is that man that heareth *Me*, that watcheth (not loungeth listlessly) daily at *My* gates, that waiteth at the posts of *My* doors.”

Happy, blessed man that waits in the spirit for Jesus! God says he *is* blessed, He *has* blessed him, and none can curse him; neither Satan, nor the law, nor sin, nor man. Blessed is every one that blesseth him, and cursed is he that curseth him. God will never be tired, however long the time may be to the watching, hearing soul. He may fear he will be cut off, but God declares He will preserve and keep him. “He that trusteth in the Lord shall never be confounded or put to shame”; and therefore will the Lord wait, that He may be gracious unto you, and therefore will He be exalted, that He may have mercy upon you. For the Lord is a God of judgment, and leads in the way of righteousness, and in the midst of the paths of judgment (Prov. 8:20). “Blessed *are all* they that wait for Him” (Isa. 30:18). John Gadsby, 1843.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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June, 1933

### Lord and Savior

“My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways, saith the Lord” (Isa. 55:8). Most solemnly do these words make manifest the terrible havoc which sin has wrought in fallen mankind. They are out of touch with their Maker; nay more, they are “*alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart*” (Eph. 4:18). In consequence of this the soul has lost its anchorage, everything has been thrown out of gear, and human depravity has turned all things upside down. Instead of subordinating the concerns of this life to the interests of the life to come, man devotes himself principally to the present, and gives little or no thought unto the eternal hereafter. Instead of putting the good of his soul before the needs of the body, man is chiefly occupied about food and raiment. Instead of man's great aim being to please God, ministering to self has become his prime business.

Man's thoughts ought to be governed by God's Word, and his ways regulated by God's revealed will. But the converse is the case. Hence it is that the things which are of great price in the sight of God (1 Peter 3:4) are despised by the fallen creature, and hence it is that “that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God” (Luke 16:15). Man has turned things topsy turvy. This is sadly evidenced when he attempts to handle Divine things: the perversity which sin has caused appears in our *reversing* God's order. Holy Scripture speaks of man's “spirit and soul and body” (1 Thess. 5:23), but when the world makes reference thereto, it says “body, soul, and spirit”--witness the motto of the Y.M.C.A. Scripture declares that Christians are “strangers and pilgrims” in this scene, but nine times out of ten, even

good men talk and write of “pilgrims and strangers.”

This tendency to reverse God's order of things is part and parcel of fallen man's nature, and unless the Holy Spirit interposes by working in us a miracle of grace, its effects are *fatal* to the soul. Nowhere do we have a more fearful and tragic example of this than in the evangelistic message which is now being given out, though scarcely any one seems aware of it. That something is radically wrong with the world is widely recognized. That Christendom too is in a sad state many are painfully conscious: that error abounds on every side, that practical godliness is at a low ebb, that worldliness has devitalized most of the churches, is apparent to an increasing number of earnest souls. But there are few indeed whose eyes are open to see *how* bad things are, few indeed perceive that things are rotten at the very foundation. Yet such is the case.

God's way of salvation is almost entirely unknown today. The “Gospel” which is being preached, even in “orthodox” circles, where it is supposed that the faith once delivered to the saints is still being earnestly contended for, is an *erroneous* gospel. Even there man has *reversed* God's order. With very rare exceptions it is being taught (and has been for upwards of thirty years) that nothing more is required in order for a sinner's salvation than that he “accept Christ as his personal *Savior*.” Later, he ought to bow to Him *as Lord*, consecrate his life to Him, and serve Him fully and gladly. But though he fails to do so, nevertheless Heaven is sure unto him. He will lack peace and joy now, and probably miss some millennial “crown,” but having received Christ “as his personal Savior,” he has been delivered from the wrath to come. Such is a reversing of God's order. It is the Devil's lie, and only the Day to come will show how many have been fatally deceived by it.

We are well aware that the above is strong language, and likely to come as a shock unto many of our readers, but we beg them to test it by what now follows. In every passage of the New Testament where these two titles occur together, it is “Lord and Savior,” and never “Savior and Lord.” The mother of Jesus averred, “My soul doth magnify the Lord, And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Savior” (Luke 1:46, 47). Unless Jehovah had first become her “Lord,” most certainly He would not have been her “Savior.” No spiritual mind that seriously ponders the matter can have any difficulty in perceiving this. How could the thrice holy God save one who scorned His authority, despised His honour, and flouted His revealed will? It is indeed infinite grace that God is ready to be reconciled to us when we throw down the weapons of our rebellion against Him, but it would be an act of unrighteousness, a putting a premium upon lawlessness, were He to pardon any sinner before he was first reconciled to His offended Maker.

In 2 Peter 1:10 the saints of God are bidden to make their “calling and election sure” (and this, by *adding to* their faith the other graces enumerated in verses 5 to 7), and are assured that if they do so they shall never fail, for so an entrance shall be ministered unto them abundantly “into the everlasting kingdom of our (1) Lord and (2) Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 1:11): that is, an abundant entrance should be given them now into His kingdom of grace, and hereafter into His kingdom of glory. But what we would particularly note is *the order* in which Christ's titles are here mentioned: it is not “our Savior and Lord” as the corrupt preaching and teaching of this degenerate day presents it; but instead, “Lord and Savior,” for He becomes the Savior of none until the heart and will unreservedly receive Him as LORD.

“For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20). Here the Apostle refers to those who had a head-knowledge of the Truth, and then apostatized. There had been a reformation in their outward lives, but no regeneration of the heart. For a while they were delivered from the pollutions of the world, but no supernatural work of grace having been wrought in their souls, the lustings of the flesh proved too strong, and they were again overcome; returning to their former manner of life like the dog to its vomit and the sow to its wallowing in the mire. The apostasy is described as “to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them” (v. 21), which has reference to the terms of discipleship made known in the Gospel. But what we are particularly concerned with is the Spirit's order: these apostates had been favoured with the “knowledge of (1) the Lord and (2) Savior Jesus Christ.”

In 2 Peter 3:18 God's people are exhorted to “grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.” Here again God's order is the very opposite of man's. Nor is this merely a technical detail, concerning which a mistake is of little moment. No, the subject of which we are now treating is basic, vital, fundamental, and error at this point is *fatal*. Those who have not submitted unto Christ as LORD, but are trusting in Him as “Savior” are deceived, and unless God graciously disillusion them, will go down to their everlasting burnings with a lie in their right hand (Isa. 44:20).

The same principal is clearly illustrated in passages where other titles of Christ occur. Take the opening verse of the New Testament, where He is presented as “Jesus Christ (1) the son of David, (2) the son of Abraham.” Waiving now the “dispensational” signification of these titles, let us view them from the doctrinal and practical viewpoint, which should *ever* be our *first* consideration. “Son of David” brings in the throne; it emphasizes His authority; it demands allegiance to His scepter. And “son of David” comes *before* “son of Abraham!” Again, in Acts 5:31 we are told, that God had exalted Jesus to His own right hand “to be (1) a Prince and (2) a Savior.” The concept embodied in the title “Prince” is that of supreme dominion and authority, as Revelation 1:5 clearly shows: “The Prince of the kings of the earth.”

If we turn to the book of Acts and read it attentively, we shall quickly discover that the message of the Apostles was altogether different--not only in emphasis, but in substance--from the preaching of our times. On the day of Pentecost Peter declared, “Whosoever shall call on the name of *the Lord* shall be saved” (2:21), and reminded his hearers that God had made Jesus (or manifested Him to be) “both Lord and Christ” (2:36), not Christ and Lord! To Cornelius and his household Peter presented Christ as “Lord of all” (10:36). When Barnabas came to Antioch, he “exhorted them all, that with purpose of heart they would cleave unto the Lord” (11:23). There also Paul and Barnabas “commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed” (14:23). At the great synod in Jerusalem, Peter reminded his fellows that the Gentiles would “seek after (not only a “Savior,” but) the Lord” (15:17). To the Philippian jailer and his household Paul and Silas preached “the Word of *the Lord*” (16:32).

What we specially desire the reader to see is not only that the Apostles *emphasized* the Lordship of Christ, but that they made surrender thereto *essential unto salvation*. This is clear from many other passages. For example, we read “And believers were the more added to (not “Christ,” but) the Lord” (Acts 5:14). “And all that dwelt at Lydda and Saron saw him, and turned to *the Lord*” (9:35). “And many believed in the

Lord” (9:42). “And much people was added unto the Lord” (11:24). “Then the deputy, when he saw what was done, believed, being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (13:12). “And Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his house” (18:8).

The fact is that very, very few today have any right conception of what a scriptural and saving *conversion* consists of. The call to it is set forth in Isaiah 55:7, “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return (having in Adam departed) unto the Lord, and He will have mercy upon him.” The character of it is described in Thessalonians 1:9, “Ye turned to God from idols, to serve the living and true God.” Conversion, then, is a turning from sin unto holiness, from self unto God, from Satan unto Christ. It is the voluntary surrendering of ourselves to the Lord Jesus, not only by consent of dependence upon His merits, but also by a willing readiness to obey Him, giving up the keys of our hearts and laying them at His feet. It is the soul declaring, “O Lord our God, other lords beside Thee *have had* dominion over us (namely, the world, the flesh, and the Devil); but by Thee only *will we* make mention of Thy name” (Isa. 26:13).

“Conversion consists in our being recovered from our present sinfulness to the moral image of God, or, which is the same thing, to a real conformity to the moral law. But a conformity to the moral law consists in *a disposition to* love God supremely, live to Him ultimately, and delight in Him superlatively, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, and *a practice agreeing thereto*. And therefore conversion consists in our being recovered from what we are by nature to such a disposition and practice” (Jas. Bellamy, 1770). Searching indeed are those words in Acts 3:26, “Unto you first God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities.” *This* is Christ's mode of blessing men: *converting* them. However the Gospel may instruct and enlighten men, so long as they remain the slaves of sin, it has conferred upon them no eternal advantage: “Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?” (Rom. 6:16).

Let us point out here that there is a very real difference between believing in the Deity of Christ and surrendering to His Lordship. There are many who are firmly persuaded that Jesus is the Son of God. They have not a doubt that He is the Maker of Heaven and earth. But that is no proof of conversion. The demons owned Him as the “Son of God” (Matt. 8:29). What we are pressing in this article is not the mind's assent to the Godhood of Christ, but the will's yielding to His authority, so that the life is regulated by His commandments. While there must be a believing in Him, there must also be a subjecting of ourselves to Him: the one being useless without the other. As Hebrews 5:9 so plainly tells us, “He became the Author of eternal salvation unto all them that *obey Him*.”

*Yet in the very face of the sunlight-clear teaching of Holy Writ, intimated above, when unsaved people are concerned about (we will not say their dreadful state, but) their future destiny, and inquire, “What must we do to be saved?” the only answer they are now given is, “Accept Christ as your personal Savior,” no effort being made to press upon them (as Paul did upon the Philippian jailer) the Lordship of Christ. John 1:12 is the verse which many a blind leader of the blind glibly quotes: “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God.” Perhaps the reader objects, “But nothing is there said about receiving Christ as Lord.” Directly, no; nor is anything there said about receiving Christ “as a*

personal *Savior*”! It is *a whole Christ* which must be received, or none at all. Why seek to halve Him?

But if the objector will carefully ponder the context of John 1:12 he will, unless blinded by prejudice, quickly discover that it is as LORD Christ *is* there presented, and as such must be “received” by us. In the previous verse we are told, “He came unto His own, and His own received Him not.” In *what* character does that view Him? Why, clearly, as the Owner and Master of Israel; and it was as such they “received Him not.” Consider too what He does for those who do receive Him: “to them gave He power (the right or prerogative) to become the sons of God.” Who but the Lord of lords is vested with authority to give unto others the title to be sons of God!

In his unregenerate state, no sinner is subject to Christ *as Lord*, though he may be fully convinced of and freely acknowledge His Deity, and employ the words “Lord Jesus” when referring to Him. When we say that no unregenerate person, “is subject unto Christ as Lord” we mean the His will is not the rule of life; to please, obey, honour and glorify Christ, is not the dominant aim, disposition, and striving of the heart. No, so far from *this* being the case, his real sentiment is “Who is the Lord that I should obey His voice?” (Exo. 5:2). The whole trend of his life in a saying, is, “I will not have this Man to *reign over me*” (Luke 19:14). Despite all their religious pretensions, the actual attitude of the unregenerate unto God is, “Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve (be in subjection to) Him?” (Job 21:14, 15). Their conduct intimates “our lips are our own: who is Lord over *us!*” (Psa. 12:4). Instead of surrendering to God in Christ, every sinner “turns unto *his own way*” (Isa. 53:6), living only to please self.

When the Holy Spirit convicts one of sin, He causes that person to see what SIN *really* is. He makes the convicted one to understand and feel that sin is rebellion against God, that it is a refusal to submit to the Lord. The Spirit causes him to recognize and realize that he has been an insurrectionist against Him who is exalted above all. He is now convicted not only of this or that sin, this or that “idol,” but is brought to realize that his whole life has been a *fighting against God*; that he has knowingly, willfully, and constantly ignored and defiled Him, deliberately preferring and choosing to go his own way. The work of the Spirit in God's elect is not so much to show and convince each of them that they are “lost sinners” (the conscience of the natural man knows that, without any supernatural operation of the Spirit!), as it is to reveal the exceeding “*sinfulness of sin*” (Rom. 7:13); and that, by making us to see and feel the fact that all sin is a species of spiritual *anarchy*, a defiance of the “Lordship” of God.

Hence it is that when a man has really and truly been “convicted” by the supernatural operations of the Holy spirit, the first effect is complete and abject *despair* in the heart. It now appears to that one that his case is utterly hopeless. He now perceives he has sinned *so* grievously that it appears impossible for a righteous God to do anything but damn him for all eternity. He now sees what a *fool* he has been in thus heeding the voice of temptation, fighting against the Most High, and in losing his own soul. He now recalls how often God has spoken to him in the past--as a child, as a youth, as an adult, upon a bed of sickness, in the death of a loved one, in adversities--and how he refused to hearken, deliberately turning a deaf ear, and defiantly going on in *his own way*. He now feels that he has in truth sinned away his day of grace.

Ah, my reader, the ground *must* be plowed and harrowed before it is made receptive to the seed. So the heart must be prepared by these harrowing experiences, the stubborn will broken, *before* it is ready for the balm of the Gospel. But O how very few ever *are* savingly “convicted” by the Spirit! As the Spirit continues His work in the soul, plowing still deeper, revealing the hideousness and heinousness of SIN, producing a horror of and hatred for it; he next begets the beginning of *hope*, which issues in an earnest and diligent seeking and inquiry “What must I do to be saved?” Then it is that He who has come to earth to glorify Christ, presses upon that awakened soul the claims of His Lordship--set forth in such passages as Luke 14:26-33--and gives us to realize that Christ demands our hearts, lives, and all. Then it is He grants grace unto the quickened soul to *renounce* all other “lords,” *to turn away from* all “idols” and to receive Christ as Prophet, Priest and King.

And nothing but the sovereign and supernatural work of God the Spirit can bring this to pass. Surely this is self-evident. A preacher may induce a man to *believe* what Scripture says about his lost and undone condition, persuade him to “bow to” the Divine verdict, and then “accept Christ as his personal Savior.” No man wants to go to Hell, and if he be intelligently assured that Christ stands ready as a fire escape, on the sole condition that he jump into His arms (“rest on His finished work”), thousands will do so. But a hundred preachers are unable to make an unregenerate person realize the unspeakably dreadful *nature of* SIN, make him feel that he has been a lifelong rebel against God, so change his heart that he now hates himself, and longs to please God and serve Christ. Only God the Spirit can bring any man to the place where he is willing to forsake every idol, cut off an hindering right hand or pluck out an offending right eye, if so be that *Christ* will “receive” him! Ah, *a miracle* of grace has been wrought when we give up ourselves to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:5) to be *ruled* by Him.

Ere closing, let us anticipate and remove an objection. Probably some are disposed to say in reply to what has been written above, “But the exhortations addressed to the saints in the New Testament Epistles show that it is *Christians*, and *not* the unsaved, who are required to surrender to God and yield to Christ's Lordship: Romans 12:1, etc. Such a mistake, now alas so commonly made, only serves to demonstrate the gross spiritual darkness which has enveloped even “orthodox” Christendom. The exhortations of the Epistles simply signify that Christians are *to continue* AS they began: “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in Him” (Col. 2:6). All the exhortations of the New Testament may be summed up in two words: “*Come to Christ*,” “*Abide in Him*,” and what is “abiding” but coming to Christ constantly--1 Peter 2:4! The saints who were exhorted as per Romans 12:1 had *already* been bidden to “yield” themselves “unto God” (6:13)! While we are left on earth we shall *ever* need such admonitions. Proof of what we have said is found in Revelation 2: the backslidden church at Ephesus was told to “Repent, and do the *first works*” (v. 5)!

And now dear reader, a pointed question: Is Christ your Lord? Does He in deed and in truth occupy the throne of your heart? Does He actually *rule* your life? If not, then most certainly He is NOT your “Savior.” Unless your heart has been renewed, unless grace has changed you from a lawless rebel into a loving and loyal subject, then you are yet in your sins, on the broad road that leadeth to destruction. May it please God, in His sovereign grace, to speak loudly to some precious souls through this article. A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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June, 1933

### **Bitters and Sweets**

Dear Brother: May mercy and peace be multiplied unto you, and may a covenant God bless you with abundance of His consolations, which are far better than the smiles of men. I have had wave upon wave, and billow upon billow since I saw you. I can assure you I did many times fear it was all over, that God had left me, that I should prove an apostate at last, and that all my prayers, groans, and fears were nothing but fleshly, and would all end in the flesh.

I understand you were at our house when my poor dear prodigal son set out on his last ramble, with the determination that he would never see T. again. When I came home from my journey and heard the particulars, had not the Lord given me a little help, I must have sunk. The old serpent set on me so unmercifully, that I reeled to and fro like a drunken man, for I have laboured for this dear child, particularly for the last four or five years, that God would prove him to be a vessel of mercy, and now he was gone for the fourth time, with the determination that he would never see father or mother, sister or brother again, but would go across the seas. O how the Devil did roar, "Where are your prayers now? Where is your hope now of his being a vessel of mercy? What do you think now of the promises which you have leaned on?" O how I staggered, and my pangs of labour came on again, I believe ten times stronger than before.

My dear friend, the lad was in my very bowels, and what could I do but travail in labour for him? I had four or five weeks' travail of soul before I could hear anything about him, except that he had passed on his

way towards Exeter. I had but one prayer for him to God, and that was that He would turn the devil out of his palace from reigning in his heart, and set up His own kingdom there, and bring him home again, sitting at Jesus' feet, clothed, and in his right mind. Here my soul was fixed, nor could I be moved from it. And sometimes my soul was in such wrestlings for this one blessing, that the devil might be dethroned out of his heart, my body has been so weak that I could scarcely crawl from one end of the room to the other. A few weeks before he sent me a letter, O what a conflict I had! It came to my mind that he was a vessel of wrath, and this text ran through me like a dagger--"He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." O how I staggered, and my very loins heaved up with pangs of grief! "What," cried I, "my dear child for whom I have travailed in such soul-trouble for five years, shall be destroyed, and that without remedy?" And then the devil presented him before my eyes, as having cut his throat, and being now in Hell, where he must be tormented forever and ever.

O my friend, I can never tell you a thousandth part of what I passed through for about an hour. O what groans I poured out that God would direct me to some portion of His dear Word. "O Lord," I cried, "do send me a crumb; do let me pick up but a single crumb." In my poor, feeble confused state of mind, I took the blessed book of God and opened it upon the eleventh chapter of Isaiah, when the first five verses so overpowered me with wonder and glory at the greatness, power, majesty, mercy, and grace of the dear Redeemer, that I was obliged to cry out, "Is anything too hard for the Lord"? But when I came to the sixth and seventh verses, I felt every string and bond break, and for a few minutes did not know whether the Lord was not breaking the pitcher at the fountain, and taking my poor tempest-tossed devil-dragged soul into the heavenly port. "The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together, and the lion shall eat straw like the ox."

O my dear friend, bless God for His mercy. He smiled, and whispered with His still small voice, "thy prayers are heard, and come up before Me. I will bring the leopard home, and he shall be heartily glad to lie down with the kids, and a little child shall lead them." O how I kissed the feet of my dear Lord! I washed them with my tears, and wiped them in my feelings with the hairs of my head. I blessed Him, praised Him, till my very body was so faint and feeble that I hardly knew for a few minutes whether I was in the body or out of it. I could not help shouting, "Rejoice not against me, O mine enemy, when I fall I shall arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord shall be light unto me."

In about a fortnight after this my dear lad wrote me a letter, to say that he was a soldier in Plymouth barracks, that he was in the very bowels of Hell night and day, and that hell from beneath was moved for him to meet him at his coming. It was such a letter of contrition that I saw in a moment that the wolf was brought to dwell with the lamb, and the leopard was willing to lie down with the kid. Upon this I wrote to Mr. T. (though he was a perfect stranger personally to me), telling him all the circumstances, and begging of him the favour to go to the barracks, and see the lad, and then to let me know what he thought of him; whether he believed he was really brought to see the error of his ways, and is heartily sick of them; and whether he thought it would be advisable for me to purchase his discharge, or not.

I soon received a letter from Mr. T. and so full was it of feeling and sympathy with me, in my trouble, and so good an account did it give of the lad, that it so broke and melted my soul into union with his soul, that

I felt as if we were one spirit. He said he believed there was a great change wrought in the lad's soul, that he was sick of his past life, and that therefore he considered it was my duty as his father, to get him out of his present situation. So I procured his discharge, and he has been at home near a month, and never did I see, bless the Lord, a more visible change. How he longs to feed amongst the kids! God has already, and still is sorely chastening him, out of His law, and what a school that is! I believe in my very heart that the kingdom of God is set up in his soul, though he is still shut up unto the faith, which, I believe, will hereafter be revealed to his soul. Poor thing! He has had two or three crumbs since he came home, and this makes him stick close under the table.

I have another testimony that sweets and bitters, emptyings and fillings, frowns and smiles, groans and songs, famishings and feastings, God has bound fast together, and neither men nor devils shall break them asunder. It is through fire and water that we are brought into a wealthy place. Yet, blessed be my covenant God, not one hair of my head has been singed. Poor fool! When I was in the furnace, I expected some times to be completely consumed. Ah, my dear friend, if God had dwelt with me on the ground of *my* faith, where must I have sunk? Into the pit, never to rise more. But though we believe not, He abideth faithful; He cannot deny Himself, bless His holy name. “As a father pitieth His children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him.” How sweet has that text been to me at times! But the Devil has come again and torn asunder with rage, and told me that it did not belong to me. And I tell you what, it does not matter what God does for me, or however He may favour me, at times with His presence, if He leaves me to the Devil and my own heart, I am disputing every bit of it. I find it just the same now as ever it was--flesh and blood are flesh and blood still; and the Devil, unbelief, carnal reason, and all his devilish crew, are devilish still. And I find that faith, love, patience, meekness, watchfulness, and every spiritual grace, either in thought, word, or deed, are all sovereign favours from God; and that not any one of them can ever be in exercise but as God the Holy Spirit draws it forth. I know that every good gift and every perfect gift is from above; and am a living witness that salvation, and salvations too, are all of grace. J.W., 1837—first published in the “Gospel Standard.” 1838

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June, 1933

### Spiritual Helplessness

“The fear of the Lord is to hate evil” (Prov. 8:13). The “fear of the Lord” is one of the many names given to that new nature or principle of grace and holiness which is communicated to the Christian at his new birth. Evidence we *have* received this Divine gift is, that sin is now a burden and a grief to us. The longing of the renewed heart is to be completely done with sin, but this longing is only realized when we are called Home. Meanwhile, sooner or later, God makes the real Christian learn by humbling experiences that he is without the least power of help from himself. It is easy to *say* “I have no power,” but not so to actually realize the fact; and therefore does God allow *us* to try and overcome our secret lusts and besetting sins, and to cast out our idols. We pray Him to help us, and every fall we have are sorry for it, and are determined not to act so foolishly again, and we really expect we shall not.

But alas, Satan and sin work upon our native corruptions, and with open eyes we go again and again into sin, and bring a heavy load of guilt upon our consciences. The “law” which Paul speaks of as being at work in his members (Rom. 7:23) is nothing else than a love of sin. This is too strong for the Christian, and though he seeks to be more diligent in reading, meditation, prayer, repenting and believing, the victory he longs for comes not to him. Yea,--we will not gloss over the solemn fact, but *honestly* acknowledge it,--matters get worse and worse. We read the Word, but it seems to have no power over us; we pray, but it seems all in vain, for the more we pray against sin, the stronger it works; and perhaps we go to the Throne of Grace with increasing reluctance. As for repentance, our hearts seem like stone, till perhaps we are ready to believe that God has given us up entirely.

Now all of this, and much more that might be said, is to teach us that we *are* altogether “without strength.” God Himself tells us that when the Ethiopian can change his skin and the leopard his spots, then can those who are accustomed to do evil, do well (Jer. 13:23); and we are brought to realize this in our experience. And how can we find it out in any other way, except by testing our own arm and discovering *our* supposed strength to be but weakness! But is this all? No; emptied of self, we are then ready to again find Christ a “very present help in trouble.” Only those who are truly sin-sick apply in earnest to the great Physician of souls! A.W.P.

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July, 1933

### Heart Work

“Do you think you came into this world to spend your whole time and strength in your employments, your trades, your pleasures, unto the satisfaction of the will of the flesh and of the mind? Have you time enough to eat, to drink, to sleep, to talk unprofitably—it may be corruptly—in all sorts of unnecessary societies, but have not enough time to live unto God, in the very essentials of that life? Alas, you came into the world under this law: 'It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment' (Heb. 9:27), and the end (purpose) why your life is here granted unto you, is that you may be prepared for that judgment. If this be neglected, if the principal part of your time be not improved with respect unto this end, you will yet fall under the sentence of it unto eternity” (John Owen, 1670).

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

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

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The pains which multitudes have taken in religion are but lost labour. Like the Pharisees of old, they have been tithing annice, and mint and cummin, but neglecting the weightier matters. Many have a zeal, but it is not according to knowledge; they are active, but their energies are misdirected; they have wrought “many wonderful works,” but they are rejected of God. Why? Because their employments are self-selected or man-appointed, while the one great task which God has assigned, is left unattended to. All outward actions are worthless while our hearts be not right with God. He will not so much as hear our prayers while we regard iniquity in our hearts (Psa. 66:18)! Let us, then, endeavor to further point out what is signified by this supremely important exhortation.

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

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

of failure, he saw to it that by renewed acts of repentance and faith (in confession) each offense was removed from his conscience; instead of allowing guilt to accumulate thereon.

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

To “keep” the heart means to “*set the Lord alway before*” us (Psa. 16:8). Some may object that those words spoke, prophetically, of the Lord Jesus. True, but remember He has “left us an example *that we should follow* His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). What, then, is it to “set the Lord alway before” us? It means to remember that His eye is ever upon us, and that we act accordingly. It means to remember that we must yet render to Him a full account of our stewardship, and to let this fact constantly influence us. It means that we are to ever have *His* honour and glory in view, living not to please ourselves but acting according to His revealed will. It means that we should strive, especially, to have *God* before our souls whenever we engage in any religious exercises. The Omniscient One will not be imposed upon by outward forms or empty words; they who worship Him “*must* worship in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). “Seek ye My face,” O to respond with David, “*my heart* said unto Thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek” (Psa. 27:8).

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

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

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

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

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

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

To "keep" the heart signifies *attending diligently to its progress or decays in holiness*. What health is to the body holiness is to the soul. "I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search" (Psa. 77:6): this is absolutely essential if a healthy spiritual life is to be maintained: a part of each day

should be set aside for the study of the heart and cultivation of its faculties. The more this is done, the less difficulty shall we experience in knowing *what* to pray for! O shame on us that we are so diligent in thinking about and caring for our bodies, while the state of our souls is so rarely inquired after. Emulate the example of Hezekiah, who “humbled himself for the pride of his heart” (2 Chron. 32:26). Peter's heart was lifted up with self-confidence: his fall was preceded by “a haughty spirit” (Prov. 16:18).

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

To “keep” the heart signifies *to store it well with pure and holy things*. As the most effective way of getting a child to willingly drop some dirty trifle is to proffer it an apple or orange, so the best security for the soul against the allurements of Satan is to have it engaged with a lovelier and more satisfying Object. A heart which is filled and engaged with good is best protected against evil. Note well the order in Philippians 4:6-8, “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God: And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, *think on these things*.” The heart which casts all its care upon God is well guarded from anxiety by His peace; but a pure atmosphere must be breathed if the soul is to be kept healthy, and that is best promoted by thinking about wholesome, lovely, and praise-provoking things.

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

(D.V. to be continued)

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July, 1933

### The Christian's Armour - Part 2

(Part 1 in August issue).

*Ephesians* 6:10-18.

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

As there was a double reference in the word "truth," first to the Word of God, and second to sincerity of spirit, so I believe there is a double reference here in "the breastplate of *righteousness*." I think it refers both to that righteousness which Christ wrought out for us, and that righteousness which the Spirit works in us; both the righteousness which is imputed and the righteousness which is imparted; which is what we need if we are to withstand the attacks of Satan. We might compare 1 *Thessalonians* 5:8, "Let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love." I have been quite impressed of late in noting how frequently that word "sober" occurs in the Epistles, either in its substantive or verbal form.

Soberness is that which should characterize and identify the people of God. It is the opposite of that superficial flightiness, which is one of the outstanding marks of worldlings today. It is the opposite of levity, and also of that feverish restlessness of the flesh, by which so many are intoxicated religiously and every other way. “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love.” Here, of course, it has the secondary meaning of what is in view in Ephesians 6:14; it is the practical righteousness, like what we find in Revelation 19:8.

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

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

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

carried over into and embodied in the Gospel the substance of everything which was found in the Law. Let me put it in another form: All the exhortations contained in the New Testament Epistles are nothing more than explanations and applications of the Ten Commandments.

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

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

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

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

Faith is the life of all the graces. If faith be not in exercise, love, hope, patience cannot be. Here we find

faith is likened unto a “shield,” because it is intended for the defense of the whole man. The shield of the soldier is something he grips, and raises or lowers as it is needed. It is for the protection of his entire person. Now the figure which the Holy Spirit uses here in connection with Satan's attacks, is taken from one of the devices of the ancients in their warfare, namely, the use of darts which had been dipped in tar and set on fire, in order to blind their foes: *that* is what lies behind the metaphor of “quench all the fiery darts of the wicked”; what is in view, is Satan's efforts to prevent our looking upward! When those darts are in the air the soldiers had to bow their heads to avoid them, holding their shields above. And Satan is seeking to prevent our looking upward.

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

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

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

“And take the helmet of salvation” (v. 17). This is the fifth piece of the Christian's armour. First of all we may note the link between the fourth and fifth pieces as denoted by the word “and,” for this helps us to define *what* the “helmet of salvation” is; it is *linked with faith!* Hebrews 11:1 tells us, “faith is the substance of things hoped for,” and if we compare 1 Thessalonians 5:8 we get a confirmation of that thought: “But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation.” Here in Thessalonians, then, we have “hope” directly connected with “the helmet.” Incidentally, this verse is one of many in the New Testament which puts salvation in the future, rather than in the past!—hope always looks forward, having to do with things to come; as Romans 8:25

tells us, “But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.” Now faith and hope are inseparable: they are one in birth, and one in growth; and, we may add, one in decay. If faith languishes, hope is listless.

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

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

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

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

The last piece of armour is given in verse 18, “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the

Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints.” *Prayer* is that which alone gives us the necessary strength *to use* the other pieces of armour! After the Christian has taken unto himself those six pieces, before he is thoroughly furnished to go forth unto battle and fitted for victory, he needs the help of his General. For this, the Apostle bids us to pray “always” with all supplication of the Spirit. We are to fight upon our knees! Only prayer can keep alive the different spiritual graces which are figured by the various pieces of armour. “Praying always”: in *every* season—in times of joy as well as sorrow, in days of adversity as well as prosperity. Not only so, but “*watching thereunto* with all perseverance”: that is one of the essential elements in prevailing prayer—persistency. Watch yourself that you do not let up, become slack or discouraged. Keep on! The 18th verse is as though the Apostle said, “Forget not to seek unto *the God of this 'armour,'* and make humble supplication for His assistance; for only He who has given us these arms can enable us to make a successful use of them.” Some have called it the “all verse.” “Praying always with all prayer . . . with all perseverance and supplication *for all saints*”: think not only of yourself, but also of your fellow-soldiers who are engaged in the same conflict!

*Question*, What does the 12th verse mean? *Answer*, It does not refer to the sphere or place where the “wrestling” itself is done, but emphasizes the fact that the foes which attack the Christian are superhuman. We are not to interpret that verse by the language of earth's geography: it does *not* say “for *we* wrestle in high places against principalities and powers.” No, the high places are connected with those who attack the Christian, and not with the place where the wrestling is done. —A.W.P.

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

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

July, 1933

### Furnace Conduct

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

“Wherefore glorify ye the LORD in the fires.” These are the words of *a godly remnant* who had been preserved in the midst of desolation. How few they were in number may be seen from verse 13: they are likened unto the handful of berries still on the boughs after the olive tree has been shaken, and unto the odd grapes remaining on the vine after the vintage. Thank God there always has been a faithful remnant preserved by Him in the most evil times, for He will not leave Himself without a witness on the earth. This little remnant is here seen triumphing, for it is said, “They shall lift up their voice, they shall *sing* for the majesty of the LORD, they shall cry aloud from the sea” (v. 14), that is, from amid the nations in a state of tumult.

Those who comprised this little remnant are here seen calling upon one another to delight themselves in

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

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

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

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

2. *By not murmuring*. Why should we grumble when we *justly* suffer what we do? “Wherefore doth a living man complain, a man for the punishment of his sins?” (Lam. 3:39). If we are now reaping as we sowed, then there is none to blame but our foolish and wicked selves for sowing *what* we did. Therefore, to put it on the lowest ground, we act irrationally when we sulk and growl under God's rod. Of Hannah we read that “she was in bitterness of soul,” yes, but observe what follows, “*and* prayed unto the LORD” (1 Sam 1:10). Instead of allowing her trouble to drive her from the Lord, it cast her back the more upon Him. To murmur is only to tempt the Lord to smite us yet more sharply! What did the children of Israel gain by their murmurings in the wilderness? Nothing; only they were made to smart for it.

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

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

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

4. *By exercising faith.* God's purpose in leading Israel through that “great and terrible wilderness, wherein were fiery serpents, and scorpions, and drought,” was that He might “humble” them, “prove” them, and do them “good” at their latter end” (Deut. 8:15, 16). God has promised to support His people under their trials (Deut. 33:27), to bring them safely through their afflictions (Isa. 41:10), to turn all things to their advantage (Rom. 8:28), and to “perfect” that which concerneth them (Psa. 138:8). Then say with Job, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (13:15). God disposes all things for the eternal welfare of His people. Do you answer, “But I am greatly afraid that I have provoked the Lord to leave me to myself”; even so, that word still stands good, “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins” (1 John 1:9).

We greatly glorify the Lord in the fires when we seek and obtain from the Holy Spirit that strengthening of faith which enables us to trust God “with all our hearts” and lean not unto our own understandings (Prov. 3:5). Faith may be likened unto a lifebelt; it is of little or no value unless it supports its possessor in the deep and dark waters. Faith does not make us impervious unto the chilliness of the waters, or, to change the figure, it does not make the furnace any cooler or more pleasant; but it *does* enable its favoured

possessor to say with Job, “When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (23:10). “The God of all grace, who hath called us unto His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1 Peter 5:10).

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

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

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

We recently received a letter which touchingly illustrated this 6th point. While on the foreign field a missionary's wife was taken ill, and ordered back. On arriving home she was operated upon, to find a terrible cancer in an advanced stage, the doctors pronouncing “No hope.” Her stricken husband wrote, “This was a terrible announcement to me at first, but the Lord has given grace to bear it, and I trust that I shall be able to sincerely say—not that I put up with His will, but that I rejoice in it”!

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

corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.” “They looked unto Him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed” (Psa. 34:5).—A.W.P.

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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### Heart Work

As well might a poor man expect to be rich in this world without industry, or for a weak man to become strong and healthy without food and exercise, as for a Christian to be rich in faith and strong in the Lord without earnest endeavour and diligent effort. It is true that all our labours amount to nothing unless the Lord bless them (Psa. 127:1), as it also is that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5). Nevertheless, God places no premium upon sloth, and has promised that “the soul of the diligent shall be made fat” (Prov. 13:4). A farmer may be fully persuaded of his own helplessness to make his fields productive, he may realize that their fertility is dependent upon the sovereign will of God, and he may also be a firm believer in the efficacy of prayer; but unless he discharges *his own duty* his barns will be empty. So it is spiritually.

God has not called His people to be drones, nor to maintain an attitude of passiveness. No, He bids them work, toil, labour. The sad thing is that so many of them are engaged in the wrong task, or, at least, giving most of their attention to that which is incidental, and neglecting that which is essential and fundamental. “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23): *this* is the great task which God has assigned unto each of His children. But O how sadly is the heart neglected! Of all their concerns and possessions, the *least* diligence is used by the vast majority of professing Christians in the keeping of their hearts. So long as they safeguard their other interests—their reputations, their bodies, their positions in the world—the heart may be left to take its own course.

As the heart in our physical body is the center and fountain of life, because from it blood circulates into every part, conveying with it either health or disease, so it is with us spiritually. If our heart be the residence of impiety, pride, avarice, malice, impure lusts, then the whole current of our lives will largely be tainted with these vices. If they are admitted there and prevail for a season, then our character and conduct will be proportionately affected. Therefore the citadel of the heart needs above all things to be well guarded, that it may not be seized by those numerous and watchful assailants which are ever attacking it. This spring needs to be well protected that its waters be not poisoned.

The man is what his heart is. If *this* be dead to God, then nothing in him is alive. If *this* be right with God, all will be right. As the mainspring of a watch sets all its wheels and parts in motion, so as a man “thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Prov. 23:7). If the heart be right, the actions will be. As a man's heart is, such is his state now and will be hereafter: if it be regenerated and sanctified there will be a life of faith and holiness in this world, and everlasting life will be enjoyed in the world to come. Therefore “Rather look to the cleansing of thine heart, than to the cleansing of thy well; rather look to the feeding of thine heart, than to the feeding of thy flock; rather look to the defending of thy heart, than to the defending of thy house; rather look to the keeping of thine heart, than to the keeping of thy money” (Peter Moffett, 1570).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). The “heart” is here put for our whole inner being, the “hidden man of the heart” (1 Peter 3:4). It is that which controls and gives character to all that we do. To “keep”—garrison or guard—the heart or soul is the great work which God has assigned us: the enablement is His, but the duty is ours. We are to keep the imagination from vanity, the understanding from error, the will from perverseness, the conscience clear of guilt, the affections from being inordinate and set on evil objects, the mind from being employed on worthless or vile subjects; the whole from being possessed by Satan. This, this is the work to which God has called us.

Rightly did the Puritan John Flavel say, “The keeping and right managing of the heart in every condition is the great business of a Christian's life.” Now to “keep” the heart right, implies that it has been *set right*. Thus it was at regeneration, when it was given a new spiritual bent. True conversion is the heart turning from Satan's control to God's, from sin to holiness, from the world to Christ. To *keep* the heart right signifies the constant care and diligence of the renewed to preserve his soul in that holy frame to which grace has reduced it, and daily strives to hold it. “Hereupon do all events depend: the heart being kept, the whole course of our life here will be according to the mind of God, and the end of it will be the enjoyment of Him hereafter. This being neglected, life will be lost, both here as unto obedience, and hereafter as to glory” (John Owen in “Causes of Apostasy”).

1. To “keep” the heart means *striving to shut out from it all that is opposed to God.* “Dear children, keep yourselves from idols” (1 John 5:21). God is a jealous God and will brook no rival; He claims the throne of our hearts, and requires to be loved by us supremely. When, then, we perceive our affections being inordinately drawn out unto any earthly object, we are to fight against it, and “resist the Devil.” When Paul said, “All things are lawful unto me, but all things are not expedient: all things are lawful for me, but I will not be *brought under the power* of any” (1 Cor. 6:12), he signifies that he was keeping his heart diligently, that he was jealous lest *things* should gain that esteem and place in his soul which was due alone unto the Lord. A very small object placed immediately before the eye is sufficient to shut out the light of the sun,

and trifling things taken up by the affections may soon sever communion with the Holy One.

Before regeneration our hearts were deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9): that was because the evil principle, the “flesh,” had complete dominion over them. But inasmuch as “the flesh” remains in us after conversion, and is constantly striving for the mastery over “the spirit,” the Christian needs to exercise a constant watchful jealousy over his heart, mindful of its readiness to be imposed upon, and its proneness unto a compliance with temptations. All the avenues to the heart need to be carefully guarded so that nothing hurtful enters therein, particularly against vain thoughts and imaginations, and especially in those seasons when they are most apt to gain an advantage. For if injurious thoughts are suffered to gain an inroad into the mind, if we accustom ourselves to give them entertainment, then in vain shall we hope to be “spiritually minded” (Rom. 8:6). All such thoughts are only making provision to fulfill the lusts of the flesh.

Thus, for the Christian to “keep” his heart with all diligence, means for him to pay close attention to the direction in which his affections are moving, to discover whether the things of the world are gaining a firmer and fuller hold over him, or whether they are increasingly losing their charm for him. God has exhorted us, “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2), and the heeding of this injunction calls for constant examination of the heart to discover whether or not it is becoming more and more dead unto this deceitful and perishing world, and whether heavenly things are those in which we find our chief and greatest delight. “Take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart” (Deut. 4:9).

2. To “keep” the heart means *striving to bring it into conformity with the Word*. We are not to rest content until an actual image of its pure and holy teachings is stamped upon it. Alas, so many today are just *playing* with the solemn realities of God, allowing them to flit across their fancy, but never embracing and making them their own. Why is it, dear reader, that those solemn impressions you had when hearing a searching sermon or reading a searching article, so quickly faded away? Why did not those holy feelings and aspirations which were stirred within you last? Why have they borne no fruit? Was it not because you failed to see that your heart was duly affected by them? You failed to “hold fast” that which you had “received and heard” (Rev. 3:3), and in consequence, your heart became absorbed again in “the cares of this life” or “the deceitfulness of riches,” and thus the Word was choked.

It is not enough to hear or read a powerful message from one of God's servants, and to be deeply interested and stirred by it. If there be no diligent effort on thy part, then it will be said “your goodness is as a morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away” (Hosea 6:4). What, then, is required? This, earnest and persevering prayer that God will fasten the message in your soul as “a nail in a sure place,” so that the devil himself cannot catch it away. What is required? This “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luke 2:19). Things which are not duly pondered are soon forgotten: meditation stands to reading as mastication does to eating. What is required? This, that you promptly put into practice what you have learned: walk according to the light God has given, or it will quickly be taken from you: Luke 8:18.

Not only must the outward actions be regulated by the Word, but the heart must also be conformed thereto. It is not enough to abstain from murder, the causeless anger must be put away. It is not enough to abstain

from the act of adultery, the inward lust must be mortified too (Matt. 5:28). God not only takes note of and keeps a record of all our external conduct, but He “weigheth the spirits” (Prov. 16:2). Every thing is naked and open before Him with whom we have to do (Heb. 4:13). Not only so, He requires *us* to scrutinize the springs from which our actions proceed, to examine our motives, to ponder *the spirit* in which we act. God requireth truth—that is, sincerity (reality)—in “the inward parts” (Psa. 51:6). Therefore does He command us “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23).

3. To “keep” the heart means *to preserve it tender unto sin*. The unregenerate man makes little or no distinction between sin and crime: so long as he keeps within the law of the land, and maintains a reputation for respectability among his fellows, he is, generally speaking, quite satisfied with himself. But it is far otherwise with one who has been born again: he has been awakened to the fact that he has to do with *God*, and must yet render a full account unto Him. He makes conscience of a hundred things which the unconverted never trouble themselves about. When the Holy Spirit first convicted him, he was made to feel that his whole life had been one of rebellion against God, of pleasing himself. The consciousness of this pierced him to the very quick: his inward anguish far exceeded any pains of body or sorrow occasioned by temporal losses. He saw himself to be a spiritual leper, and hated himself for it, and mourned bitterly before God. He cried, “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).

Now it is the duty of the Christian, and part of the task which God has set him, to see to it that this sense of the exceeding sinfulness of sin be not lost. He is to labour daily that his heart be duly affected by the heinousness of self-will and self-love. He is to steadfastly resist every effort of Satan to pity himself, to think lightly of wrong doing, or to excuse himself in the same. He is to live in the constant realization that the eye of God is ever upon him, so that when tempted he will say with Joseph, “How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). He is to view sin in the light of the Cross, daily reminding himself that it was *his* iniquities which caused the Lord of Glory to be made a curse for him; employing the dying love of Christ as a motive why he must not allow himself in anything that is contrary to the holiness and obedience which the Saviour asks from all His redeemed.

Ah, my Christian reader, it is no child's play to “keep the heart with all diligence.” The easy-going religion of our day will never take its devotees (or rather, its *victims!*) to Heaven. The question has been asked, “Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord, or *who* shall stand in His holy place?” (Psa. 24:3), and plainly has the question been answered by God Himself: “He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart” etc. (Psa. 24:4). Equally plain is the teaching of the New Testament, “Blessed are the pure in heart: for *they* shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). A “pure heart” is one that hates sin, which makes conscience of sin, which grieves over it, which strives against it. A “pure heart” is one that seeks to keep undefiled the temple of the Holy Spirit, the dwelling place of Christ (Eph. 3:17).

4. To “keep” the heart means to *look diligently after its cleansing*. Perhaps some of our readers often find themselves sorrowfully crying, “O the vileness of my heart!” Thank God, if He *has* discovered this to you; if such be so, and you really feel it, it is clear proof that He has made you to differ from the multitudes of blindly-indifferent professing Christians all around you. But, dear friend, there is no sufficient reason why your “heart” should *continue* to be vile. You might lament that your garden was overgrown with weeds

and filled with rubbish; but need it remain so? We speak now not of your sinful *nature*, the incurable and unchangeable “flesh” which still indwells you; but of your *heart*, which God bids you “keep.” You *are* responsible to purge your mind of vain imaginations, your soul of unlawful affections, your conscience of guilt.

But, alas, you say, “I have no control over such things: they come unbidden and I am powerless to prevent them.” So the Devil would have you believe! Revert again to the analogy of your garden: do not the weeds spring up unbidden; do not the slugs and other pests seek to prey upon the plants? What, then? Do you merely bewail your helplessness? No, you resist them and take means to keep them under. Thieves enter houses uninvited, but whose fault is it if the doors and windows be left unfastened? O heed not the seductive lullabies of Satan. God says, “purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 4:8); that is, one mind for Him, and another for self; one for holiness, and another for the pleasures of sin.

But *how* am I to “purify” my heart? By vomiting up the foul things taken into it—shamefacedly owning them before God, repudiating them, turning from them with loathing; and it is written “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). By daily renewing our exercise of repentance, and *such* repentance as is spoken of in 2 Corinthians 7:11: “For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.” By the daily exercise of faith (Acts 15:9), appropriating afresh the cleansing blood of Christ, bathing every night in that “fountain” which has been opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1). By treading the path of God's commandments: “Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit” (1 Peter 1:22).

We close this first article by pointing out, what is obvious to every Christian reader, namely, that such a task calls for Divine aid. Help and grace need to be earnestly and definitely sought of the Holy Spirit each day. We should bow before God, and in all simplicity say, “Lord, Thou requirest me to keep my heart with all diligence, and I feel utterly incompetent for such a task: such a work lies altogether beyond my poor feeble powers; therefore, I humbly ask Thee in the name of Christ to graciously grant unto me supernatural strength to do as Thou hast bidden me. Lord, work in me both to will and to do of Thy good pleasure.”  
—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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August, 1933

### **The Christian's Armour - Part 1**

(Part 2 in July Issue)

*Ephesians* 6:10-18.

In the passage which is to be before us the Apostle gathers up the whole previous subject of the Epistle into an urgent reminder of the solemn conditions under which the Christian's life is lived. By a graphic figure he shows that the Christian's life is lived on the battlefield, for we are not only pilgrims but soldiers; we are not only in a foreign country, but in the enemy's land. Though the redemption which Christ has purchased for His people be free and full, yet, between the beginning of its application to us and the final consummation of it, there is a terrible and protracted conflict through which we have to pass. This is not merely a figure of speech, but a grim reality. Though salvation is free, yet it is not obtained without great effort. The fight to which God's children are called in this life, is one in which Christians themselves receive many sore wounds, and thousands of professors are slain. Now, as we shall see in the verses which follow, the Apostle warns us that the conflict has to do with more than human foes: the enemies we have to meet are superhuman ones, and therefore in order to successfully fight against them we need supernatural strength.

We must remember that the Christian belongs to the spiritual realm as well as the natural, and so he has spiritual as well as natural foes; and hence he needs spiritual strength as well as physical. Therefore the

Apostle begins here by saying, “Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10). The word “finally” denotes that the Apostle had reached his closing exhortation, and the words “be strong” link up with what immediately proceeds as well as with what now follows. Some of you will remember that the whole of the fifth, and opening verses of the sixth chapters are filled with exhortations: exhortations that pertain to each aspect of the Christian life; exhortations to regulate him in the home, in business, in the world. Those exhortations are addressed to the husband, wife, child, master, servant, and in order for the Christian to obey them he needs to be “strong in the Lord and in the power of His might.” Thus, the call which is given in verse 10 is not only an introduction to what follows, but is also closely related to that which precedes.

“Finally, my brethren”—after all the Christian duties I have set before you in the previous verses, now—“be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.” The words “Be strong” mean to muster strength for the conflict, and be strong “in the Lord” signifies we must seek that strength from the only source from which we can obtain it. Note carefully it is not “be strong *from* the Lord,” nor is it “be strengthened *by* the Lord.” No, it is “be strong *in* the Lord.” Perhaps you will get the thought if I use this analogy: just as a thumb that is amputated is useless, and just as a branch cut off from the vine withers, so a Christian whose fellowship with the Lord has been broken, is in a strengthless, fruitless, useless state. Thus, “be strong in the Lord” means first of all, see to it that you maintain a live practical relationship to and remain in constant communion with the Lord. Just as my arm must be a part of, a member, in my body, if it is to be vitalized and fitted to perform its functions, so I must be in real touch with the Lord, in daily communion with Him, in living contact—not in theory, but in *actual* experience. It is deeply important that we should, ere we proceed farther, grasp the exhortation found in verse 10: otherwise there will be no strength for the conflict.

“Be strong in the Lord *and* in the power of His might.” At first sight there seems to be a needless repetition there; but it is not so. A soldier not only needs strength of body for the carrying of his heavy weapons, for the strain of long marches, and for the actual fighting, but he also needs *courage*: a powerful giant who is a coward would make no sort of soldier. The two chief things which are needed for one engaged in fighting, are strength and courage, or vitality and a brave heart; and that is what is in view in verse 10—the last clause brings in the thought of boldness. “Be strong”: in faith, in hope, in wisdom, in patience, in fortitude, in every Christian grace. To be strong in grace, is to be weak in sin. It is vitally essential to remember that we need to have our strength and courage renewed daily. Be strong in the Lord: seek His strength at the beginning of each day—“they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength” (Isa. 40:31). God does not impart strength to us wholesale: He will not give me strength on Monday morning to last through the week. No, there has to be the *renewing* of our strength, and that strength has to be drawn from the Lord by the actings of faith, appropriating from *His* “fullness.” The enemies we have to contend with cannot be overcome by human wisdom and might. Unless we go forth to the conflict continually looking to Christ for all needed supplies of grace, deriving all our vitality from Him, we are sure to be defeated.

“Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). Our first need is to stir up ourselves to *resist* temptation by a believing reliance upon God's all-sufficient grace, that is, obtaining from Him the strength which will enable us to go forth and fight against the foe.

Our second greatest need is to be *well armed* for the conflict into which we must daily enter. *This* is the relation between verses 10 and 11: “Be strong in the Lord” and “Put on the whole armour of God”: first, stir up yourselves to resist temptation, seeking strength at the beginning of the day for the conflict; then see to it that you take unto yourselves, put on, the whole armour of God.

The Christian is engaged *in a warfare*. There is a fight before him, hence armour is urgently needed. It is impossible for us to stand against the wiles of the devil unless we avail ourselves of the provisions which God has made for enabling us *to stand*. Observe it is called “the armour *of God*”: just as the strength we need, comes not from ourselves, but must be supplied by the Lord; so our means of defense lie not in our own powers and faculties, but only as they are quickened by God. It is called the “armour of God” because *He* both provides and bestows it, for we have none of our own; and yet, while this armour is of God's providing and bestowing, *we* have to “put it on”! God does not fit it on us; He places it before us; and it is *our* responsibility, duty, task, to *put on* the whole armour of God. I may say that this same figure of “the armour” is used three times in the Epistles of Paul, and I believe we find in them a reference to the Trinity. I think the “armour of righteousness” (2 Cor. 6:7) looks more particularly unto Christ; the “armour of light” (Rom. 13:12) more especially to the Holy Spirit, who is the One that immediately illuminates us: and the “armour of God” unto the the Father, who is the Provider of it.

Now it is very important we should recognise that this term “armour” is a figurative one, a metaphor, and refers not to something which is material or carnal. It is a figurative expression denoting the Christian's *graces*: the various parts of the armour represent the different spiritual graces which are to protect his varied faculties; and when we are told to “put on” the armour, it simply means we are to call into exercise and action our graces. Notice, “Put on *the whole* armour of God,” that is, avoiding the snares of the devil; or to drop the figure, so exercise all the Christian graces that no part of the soul is exposed unto the Enemy. Those who wish to approve themselves of being in possession of Grace, must see to it that they have all the graces of a saint. “Put on the whole armour of God, that (in order that) ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil” (Eph. 6:11). There is no standing against him if we are not armoured: or to drop the figure, there is no success in resisting the devil if our graces be not in exercise. On the other hand, there is no failing and falling before him if our graces are healthy and active.

“For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (v. 12). The opening “For” has the force of “Because”: the Apostle is advancing a reason, which virtually amounts to an argument, so as to enforce the exhortation just given. Because we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, not against puny human enemies no stronger than ourselves, but against powers and rulers of the darkness of this world: therefore the panoply of God is essential. That is brought in to emphasize the terribleness of the conflict before us. It is no imaginary one, and no ordinary foes we have to meet; but spiritual, superhuman, invisible ones. Those enemies seek to destroy faith and produce doubt. They seek to destroy hope and produce despair. They seek to destroy humility and produce pride. They seek to destroy peace and produce bitterness and malice. They seek to prevent our enjoyment of heavenly things by getting us unduly occupied with earthly things. Their attack is not upon the body, but upon the soul.

“Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and

having done all, to stand” (v. 13). The opening “Wherefore” means, in view of the fact that we wrestle against these powerful superhuman, invisible foes, who hate us with a deadly hatred and are seeking to destroy us; therefore appropriate and use the provision which God has made, so that we may stand and withstand. The first clause of verse 13 explains the opening words of verse 11. Verse 11 says “put on,” make use of all proper defensives and weapons for repulsing the attacks and the 13th says “take unto you the whole armour of God”: we “put on” by taking it “unto us,” that is, by appropriation, by making it our own. “That ye may be able to withstand”: to *withstand* is the opposite of yielding, of being tripped up, thrown down, by the devil's temptations; it means that we stand our ground, strive against and resist the devil. “That ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand”: the “*stand*” is the opposite of a slothful sleep or a cowardly flight. We have that illustrated in the case of the Apostles. In Gethsemane *they* did not “stand,” but lay down and slept at the post of duty. No wonder that a little later they all “forsook Him and fled” (Matt. 26:56)!

I want you to notice that we are not here told to *advance*. We are only ordered to “stand.” God has not called His people to an aggressive war upon Satan, to invade his territory, and seek to wrest from him what is his; but He has told us to occupy the ground which He has allotted us. I want you to see what would have been implied had this verse said “take unto you the whole armour of God, and advance upon the devil, storm his strongholds, liberate his prisoners.” But not so: the Lord has given no charge or commission to the rank and file of His people to engage in what is now called “personal work,” soul winning, “rescuing the perishing.” Indeed He has not: the work of preaching the Gospel *belongs alone* unto His own personally called and Divinely equipped servants or ministers. All such feverish activities of the flesh as we now behold in the religious world, find no place in this Divine exhortation “having done all, to *stand*.” This is the third time in these verses the Spirit of God has repeated that word “Stand”—not advance, not rush hither and thither, like a crazy person. “Stand therefore” is *all* God has told us to do in our conflict with the devil.

“Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14). Now that brings before us the first of the seven pieces of the Christian's Armour which is mentioned in the passage. First, let me warn you against the carnalization of this word, thinking of something that is external, visible, or tangible. The figure of the “girdle” is taken from a well known custom in Oriental countries, where the people all wear long flowing outer garments reaching to the feet, which would impede their actions when walking, working or fighting. The first thing a person does there when about to be active, is to gird up around his waist that outer garment which trails to the ground. When the garment is not girded and hangs down, it indicates the person is at rest. To “gird up” is therefore the opposite of sloth and ease, following the line of least resistance. Be girded about with a girdle of truth: I believe there is a double reference or meaning here in the word “truth.” But first of all, I want to take up *what it is* that we need to “gird.”

The breastplate is for the heart, the helmet for the head, what, then, is the “girdle” for? In that from which the figure is borrowed, the reference is to *the waist* or loins. But what does that metaphor denote? Plainly, the center or mainspring of all our activities. And what is that? Obviously, it is *the mind*. The mind is the mainspring of action: first the thought, and then the carrying out of it. 1 Peter 1:13 helps us here: “gird up the loins *of your mind*.” “Having your loins girt about with truth” (Eph. 6:14): it is not so much our embracing the truth, as the truth embracing us. Thus, the spiritual reference is to *the holding in and*

*regulation of the thoughts of the mind.* The mind “girded up,” means a mind which is disciplined; the opposite of one where the thoughts are allowed to run loose and wild. Again; the “loins” are the place of strength, so is the mind. If we allow our thoughts and imaginations to run wild, we will have no communion with God, and no power against Satan. If our thoughts are not brought into captivity, in obedience to Christ, the devil will soon gain a hold over us.

“Having your loins girt about with truth.” I think the word “truth” has reference, in the first place, to the Word of God: “Thy Word is *truth*” (John 17:17): *that* is what must regulate the mind, control the thoughts, subdue the imaginations: there must be a knowledge of, faith in, love for, subjection to, God's Word. “Stand therefore, having your loins (your mind) girt about with *truth*” (v. 14). Now that suggests to us the characteristic quality of the adversary against whom we are called upon to arm. Satan is a liar, and we can only meet him with the Truth. Satan prevails over ignorance by means of guile or deceit; but he has no power over those whose minds are regulated by the Truth of God. “If ye continue in My Word, then are ye My disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” (John 8:31, 32)—“free” from the toils, the power, the deceptions of Satan.

I think the word “truth” here has a second meaning. Take for example Psalm 51:6, God “desirest truth in the inward parts”: “truth” there signifies reality, sincerity. Truth is the opposite of hypocrisy, pretense, unreality. That is why the girdle of truth comes first, because if *it* be lacking, everything else is vain and useless. The strength of every grace lies in *the sincerity* of it. In 1 Timothy 1:5 we read of “faith unfeigned,” which means true, genuine, real faith; in contrast from a faith which is only theoretical, notional, lifeless, inoperative—a faith which utterly withers before the fires of testing.

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ *in sincerity*” (Eph. 6:24). That is another discriminating verse, distinguishing between a real and false love, a true and faithless love. There are thousands of Protestants who have a similar love for Christ as Romanists have for His mother, Mary: it is merely a natural love, a fleshly sentiment, a carnal emotion. But genuine, spiritual love for Him, strives to *please* Him: it is an intensely practical thing, a principle of holy obedience. O how we need to *examine* our graces and test them by Scripture, to see whether *our* faith and love be genuine. We repeat that, reality and sincerity are the strengths of every Christian grace. That is why the Girdle of Truth comes first in the different pieces of armour.

The Girdle of Truth (corresponding to the military belt of the warrior) signifies, then, the mind being regulated by the Word of God, and guarded by real sincerity; and this alone will protect us against Satan's temptations unto slackness, of guile and hypocrisy. Only as this is “put on” by us, shall we be able to “*stand* against the wiles of the devil”: to “stand” is to so “resist” him that he does not throw us down. To “put on” the girdle of truth means applying the Word to the first movements of our minds. This is where Eve failed: she had received the Word, but not in the love of it. Instead of resisting the devil, she parleyed with him. Instead of the truth bridling her imaginations and desires, she cast it from her. How different with Christ! When Satan approached Him, He *was* girded with the girdle of truth: His thoughts were regulated by the Word, and there was an absolute sincerity Godwards. —A.W.P.

(Completed in the JULY issue.)

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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September, 1933

### Heart Work

“Man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7). How prone we are to be occupied with that which is evanescent, rather than with the things that abide; how ready to gauge things by our senses, instead of by our rational powers. How easily we are deceived by that which is on the surface, forgetting that true beauty lies within. How slow we are to adopt God's way of estimating. Instead of being attracted by comeliness of physical features, we should value moral qualities and spiritual graces. Instead of spending so much care, time, and money in the adorning of the body, we ought to devote our best attention unto the developing and directing of the faculties of our souls. Alas, the vast majority of our fellows live as though they had no souls, and the average professing Christian gives very little serious thought unto the same.

Yes, the Lord “looketh on the heart”: He sees its thoughts and intents, knows its desires and designs, beholds its motives and motions, and deals with us accordingly. The Lord discerns what qualities are in our hearts: what holiness and righteousness, what wisdom and prudence, what justice and integrity, what mercy and kindness. When such graces are lively and flourishing, then is fulfilled that verse “My beloved is gone down into His garden, to the beds of spices, to feed in the gardens, and to gather lilies” (Song 6:2). God esteems nothing so highly as holy faith, unfeigned love, and filial fear; in His sight a “meek and quiet spirit” is of “great price” (1 Peter 3:4). O to be careful in the cultivation of that which gives *Him* delight: then “keep thine heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23).

The sincerity of our profession largely depends upon the care and conscience we have in keeping our hearts. A very searching example of this is found in 2 Kings 10:31, “But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart.” Those words are the more solemn because of what is said of him in the previous verse: “And the LORD said unto Jehu, Because thou hast done well in executing that which is right in Mine eyes, and hast done unto the house of Ahab according to all that was in Mine heart, thy children of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.” Jehu was partial in his reformation, which showed his heart was not right with God; he abhorred the worship of Baal which Ahab had fostered, but he tolerated the golden calves which Jeroboam had set up. He failed to put away all the evil.

Ah, my reader, true conversion is not only turning away from gross sin, it is the heart forsaking *all* sin. There must be no reserve, for God will not allow any idol, nor must we. Jehu went so far, but he stopped short of the vital point; he put away evil, but he did not do that which was good. He heeded not the law of the Lord to walk in it “with all his *heart*.” It is greatly to be feared that those who are heedless are graceless, for where the principle of holiness is planted in the heart, it makes its possessor circumspect and desirous of pleasing God in all things—not from servile fear, but from grateful love; not by constraint, but freely; not occasionally, but constantly.

“My son, give Me thine heart” (Prov. 23:26). “The heart is that which the great God requires, and calls for from every one of us; whatever we give, if we do not give Him our hearts, it will not be accepted. We must set our love upon Him; our thoughts must converse much with Him; and on Him, as our highest end, the intents of our hearts must be fastened. We must make it our own act and deed to devote ourselves to the Lord, and we must be free and cheerful in it. We must not think to divide the heart between God and the world; He will have all or none: 'thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart.' To this call we must readily answer, My Father, take my heart, such as it is, and make it such as it should be; take possession of it, and set up Thy throne in it” (Matthew Henry).

“Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Prov. 4:23). Guard it jealously as the dwelling place of Him to whom you have given it. Guard it with the utmost vigilance, for not only is there the enemy without seeking entrance, but there is a traitor within desirous of dominion. The Hebrew for “with all diligence” literally rendered is, “above all”: above all the concerns of thy outward life, for careful as we should be as to that, it is before the eyes of men, whereas the heart is the object of *God's* holy gaze. Then “keep” or preserve it more sedulously than your reputation, your body, your estate, your money. With all earnestness and prayer labour that no evil desire prevails or abides there, avoiding all that excites lust, feeds pride, or stirs up anger, crushing the first emotions of such evils as you would the brood of a scorpion.

Many people place great expectations in varied circumstances and conditions. One thinks he could serve God much better if he were more prospered temporally; another, if he passed through the refining effects of poverty and affliction. One thinks his spirituality would be promoted if he could be more retired and solitary; another, if only he could have more society and Christian fellowship. But, my reader, the only way to serve God better is to be content with the place in which He has put you, and therein *get a better heart!* We shall never enter into the advantages of any situation, nor overcome the disadvantages of any condition, until we fix and water the root of them in ourselves. It is out of *the heart* are the “issues of life,”

and not from our surroundings. “Make the tree good, *and* his fruit good” (Matt. 12:33): get the heart right, and you will soon be superior unto all “circumstances.”

“But how can I get my heart right? Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots?” Answer, you are creating your own difficulty by confounding “heart” with “nature”; they are quite distinct. It is important to recognize this, for many are confused thereon. There has been such an undue emphasis upon the “two natures in the Christian,” that often it has been lost sight of that the Christian is *a person* over and above his two natures. The Scriptures make the distinction clear enough. For example, God does not bid us keep our “nature,” but He does our “heart.” We do not believe with our “nature,” but we do with our “hearts” (Rom. 10:10)! God never tells us to “rend” our nature (Joel 2:13), “circumcise” our nature (Deut. 10:16), “purify” our nature (James 4:8), but He does our “hearts”! The “heart” is the very center of my responsibility, and to deny that I am to improve and keep it, is to repudiate human accountability.

It is the Devil who seeks to persuade people that they are not responsible for the state of their hearts, and may no more change them than they can the stars in their courses. And the “flesh” within finds such a lie very agreeable to its case. But he who has been regenerated by the sovereign grace of God, cannot, with the Scriptures before him, give heed unto any such delusion. While he has to deplore how sadly neglected is the great task which God has set before him, while he has to bemoan his wretched failure in making his heart what it ought to be, nevertheless, he wants to do better; and after his duty has been pressed upon him—as it now has upon the readers of these articles—he will daily seek grace to better discharge his duty, and instead of being totally discouraged by the difficulty and greatness of the work required, he will cry the more fervently to the Holy Spirit for His enablement.

The Christian who means business will labour to have a “willing” heart (Exo. 35:5)—which acts spontaneously and gladly, not of necessity. A “perfect” heart (1 Chron. 29:9)—sincere, genuine, upright. A “tender” heart (2 Chron. 34:27)—yielding and pliable, the opposite of hard and stubborn. A “broken” heart (Psa. 34:18)—sorrowing over all failure and sin. A “united” heart (Psa. 86:11)—all the affections centered on God. An “enlarged” heart (Psa. 119:32)—delighting in *every* part of Scripture, and loving *all* God's people. A “sound” heart (Prov. 14:30)—right in doctrine and practice. A “merry” heart (Prov. 15:15)—rejoicing in the Lord alway. A “pure” heart (Matt. 5:8)—hating all evil. An “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15)—free from guile and hypocrisy, willing to be searched through and through by the Word. A “single” heart (Eph. 6:5)—desiring only God's glory. A “true” heart (Heb. 10:22)—genuine in all its dealings with God.

The duty of keeping the heart with the utmost diligence, is binding upon the Christian at all times: there is no period or condition of life in which he may be excused from this work. Nevertheless, there are distinctive seasons, critical hours, which call for more than a common vigilance over the heart, and it is a few of these which we would now contemplate, seeking help from above to point out some of the most effectual aids unto the right accomplishment of the task God has assigned us. General principles are always needful and beneficial, yet details have to be furnished if we are to know how to apply them in particular circumstances. It is this lack of definiteness which constitutes one of the most glaring defects in so much modern ministry. Mere generalizations and platitudes are substituted for specific instructions, and God has good reason to complain today, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hosea 4:6).

1. *In times of Prosperity.* When providence smiles upon us and bestows temporal gifts with a lavish hand, then has the Christian urgent reason to keep his heart with all diligence, for that is the time we are apt to grow careless, proud, earthly. Therefore was Israel cautioned of old, “And it shall be, when the LORD thy God shall have brought thee into the land which He sware unto thy fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildedst not, And houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged, which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not; when thou shalt have eaten and be full; *Then beware* lest thou forget the LORD” (Deut. 6:10-12). But they heeded not that exhortation for “Jeshurun waxed fat, and kicked” (Deut. 32:14).

Many are the warnings furnished in Scripture. Of Uzziah it is recorded, “when he was strong, his heart was lifted up to his destruction” (2 Chron. 26:16). Of the king of Tyre God said, “thine heart is lifted up because of thy riches” (Ezek. 28:5). Of Israel we read, “And they took strong cities, and a fat land, and possessed houses full of all goods, wells digged, vineyards, and oliveyards, and fruit trees in abundance: so they did eat, and were filled, and became fat, and delighted themselves in Thy great goodness. *Nevertheless* they were disobedient, and rebelled against Thee, and cast Thy law behind their backs, and slew Thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to Thee” (Neh. 9:25, 26). And again, “Of their silver and their gold have they made them idols” (Hosea 8:4); “according to the goodness of His land they have made goodly images” (Hosea 10:1); “According to their pasture, so were they filled; they were filled, and their heart was exalted; therefore have they forgotten Me” (Hosea 13:6).

Sad indeed are the above passages, the more so because we have seen such a tragic repetition of them in our own days. O the earthly-mindedness which prevailed, the indulging of the flesh, the sinful extravagance, which were seen among professing Christians while “times were good!” How practical godliness waned, how the denying of self disappeared, how covetousness, pleasure and wantonness possessed the great majority of those calling themselves the people of God. Yet great as was their sin, far greater was that of most of the preachers, who instead of warning, admonishing, rebuking, and setting before their people an example of sobriety and thrift, criminally remained silent upon the crying sins of their hearers, and themselves encouraged the reckless spending of money and the indulgence of worldly lusts. How, then, is the Christian to keep his heart from these things in times of prosperity?

First, by seriously pondering the dangerous and ensnaring temptations which attend a prosperous condition, for very, very few of those that live in the prosperity and pleasures of this world escape eternal perdition. “It is easier (said Christ) for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:24). O what multitudes have been carried to Hell in the cushioned chariots of earthly wealth and ease, while a comparative handful have been whipped to Heaven by the rod of affliction. Remember too that many of the Lord's own people have sadly deteriorated in seasons of worldly success. When Israel was in a low condition in the wilderness, then were they “holiness unto the Lord” (Jer. 2:3); but when they fed in the fat pastures of Canaan they said, “We are lords; we will come no more unto Thee” (Jer. 2:31).

Second, diligently seek grace to heed that word, “If riches increase, set not your heart upon them” (Psa. 62:10). Those riches may be given to try thee; not only are they most uncertain things, often taking to themselves wings and flying swiftly away, but at best they cannot satisfy the soul, and only perish with the

using. Remember that God values no man a jot more for these things: He esteems us by inward graces, and not outward possessions: “in every nation he that feareth Him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with Him” (Acts 10:35). Third, urge upon thy soul the consideration of that awful Day of Reckoning, wherein, according to our receipt of mercies, so shall be our accountings of them: “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luke 12:48). Each of us must yet give an account of our stewardship: of every dollar we have spent, of every hour wasted, of every idle word uttered!

2. *In times of Adversity.* When providence frowns upon us, overturning our cherished plans, and blasting our outward comforts, then has the Christian urgent need to look to his heart, and keep it with all diligence from replying against God or fainting under His hand. Job was a mirror of patience, yet his heart was discomposed by trouble. Jonah was a man of God, yet he was peevish under trial. When the food supplies gave out in the wilderness, they who had been miraculously delivered from Egypt, and who sang Jehovah's praises so heartily at the Red Sea, murmured and rebelled. It takes much grace to keep the heart calm amid the storms of life, to keep the spirit sweet when there is much to embitter the flesh, and to say “The LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (Job 1:21). Yet this is a Christian duty! To help thereunto.

First, consider, fellow-Christian, that despite these cross providences, God is still faithfully carrying out the great design of electing love upon the souls of His people, and orders these very afflictions as means sanctified to that end. Nothing happens by chance, but all by Divine counsel (Eph. 1:11), and therefore it is that “all things work together *for good* to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose” (Rom 8:28). Ah, beloved, it will wonderfully calm thy troubled breast and sustain thy fainting heart to rest upon that blessed fact. The poor worldling may say, “the bottom has dropped out of everything,” but not so the saint, for the eternal God is *his* refuge, and underneath him are still the “everlasting arms.” Then, “Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). The very afflictions which are so painful unto flesh and blood are designed for our spiritual blessing: God chastens for “our *profit*” (Heb. 12:10).

It is ignorance or forgetfulness of God's loving designs which makes us so prone to chafe under His providential dealings. If faith were more in exercise we should, “Count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations” or “trials” (James 1:2). Why so? Because we should discern those very trials were sent to wean our hearts from this empty world, to tear down pride and carnal security, to refine us. If, then, my Father has a design of love unto my soul, do I well to be angry with Him? If not now, later, you will see those bitter disappointments were blessings in disguise, and will exclaim “It is good for me that I have been afflicted” (Psa. 119:71).—A.W.P.

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September, 1933

### **The Right Use of the Law**

Dear Sir: You desire my thoughts on 1 Timothy 1:8, “We know that the law is good, if a man use it lawfully,” and I willingly comply. I do not mean to send you a sermon on the text; yet a little attention to method may not be improper upon this subject, though in a letter to a friend. Ignorance of the nature and design of the law is at the bottom of most religious mistakes. This is the root of self-righteousness, the grand reason why the Gospel of Christ is no more regarded, and the cause of that uncertainty and inconsistency in many, who, though they profess themselves teachers, understand not what they say, nor whereof they affirm. If we previously state what is meant by the law, and by what means we know the law to be good, I think it will, from these premises, be easy to conclude what it is to use the law lawfully.

The law, in many passages of the Old Testament, signifies the whole revelation of the will of God, as in Psalm 1:2. But the law, in a strict sense, is contradistinguished from the Gospel. Though the Apostle considers it at large in his Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, I think it is evident that, in the passage you have proposed, the Apostle is speaking of the law of Moses. But, to have a clearer view of the subject, it may be proper to look back to a more early period.

The law of God, then, is, in its largest sense, that rule, or prescribed course, which He has appointed for His creatures, according to their several natures and capacities, that they may answer the end for which He has created them. Thus it comprehends the inanimate creation: the wind and storm fulfill His word or law. He hath appointed the moon for seasons, and the sun knoweth his time for going down and going forth,

and performs all his revolutions according to his Maker's pleasure. If we could suppose the sun was an intelligent being, and should refuse to shine, or should wander from the station in which God has placed him, he would then be a transgressor of the law. But there is no such discord in the natural world. The law of God in this sense, or what many choose to call the law of nature, is no other than the impression of God's power, whereby all things continue and act according to His will from the beginning; for "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast" (Psa. 33:9).

The animals, destitute of reason, are likewise under a law; that is, God has given them instincts according to their several kinds, for their support and preservation, to which they invariably conform. A wisdom unspeakably superior to all the contrivances of man, disposes their concerns, and is visible in the structure of a bird's nest, or the economy of a bee hive. But this wisdom is restrained within narrow lines; they act without any remote design, and are incapable either of good or evil in a moral sense.

When God created man, He taught him more than the beasts of the earth, and made him wiser than the fowls of heaven. He formed him for Himself, breathed into him a spirit, immortal and incapable of dissolution, gave him a capacity not to be satisfied with any creature-goodness, endowed him with an understanding, will, affections, which qualified him for the knowledge and service of his Maker, and a life of communion with Him. The law of God, therefore, concerning man, is that rule of disposition and conduct to which a creature so constituted ought to conform: so that the end of his creation might be answered and the wisdom of God be manifested in him and by him. Man's continuance in this regular and happy state was not necessary as it is in the creatures, who, having no rational powers, have properly no choice, but act under the immediate agency of Divine power. As man was capable of continuing in the state in which he was created, so he was capable of forsaking it. He did so, and sinned by eating the forbidden fruit. We are not to suppose that this prohibition was the whole of the law of Adam, so that if he had abstained from the tree of knowledge, he might in other respects have done (as we say) what he pleased. This injunction was the test of his obedience; and while he regarded it, he could have no desire contrary to holiness, because his nature was holy. But when he broke through it, he broke through the whole law, and stood guilty of idolatry, blasphemy, rebellion and murder. The Divine light in his soul was extinguished, the image of God defaced; he became like Satan, whom he had obeyed, and lost the power to keep that law which was connected with happiness. Yet, still the law remained in force; the blessed God could not lose His right to that reverence, love and obedience, which must always be due to Him from His intelligent creatures. Thus Adam became a transgressor, and incurred the penalty, death. But God, who is rich in mercy, according to His eternal purpose, revealed the promise of the Seed of the woman, and instituted sacrifices as types of that atonement for sin, which He, in the fullness of time, should accomplish by the sacrifice of Himself.

Adam, after his fall, was no longer a public person; he was saved by grace through faith (this, we believe, is a mistake—A.W.P.); but the depravity he had brought upon human nature, remained. His children, and so all his posterity, were born in his sinful likeness, without either ability or inclination to keep the law (though still possessing the requisite faculties—A.W.P.). The earth was soon filled with violence. But a few in every successive age were preserved by grace, and faith in the promise. Abraham was favoured with a more full and distinct revelation of the covenant of grace; he saw the day of Christ, and rejoiced. In the time of Moses, God was pleased to set apart a peculiar people to Himself, and to them He published

His law with great solemnity at Sinai. This law consisted of two distinct parts, very different in their scope and design, though both enjoined by the same authority.

The Decalogue, or ten commandments, uttered by the voice of God Himself, is *an abstract of that original law* under which man was created, but published in a prohibitory form; the Israelites, like the rest of mankind, being depraved by sin, and strongly inclined to the commission of every evil, this law could not be designed as a covenant, by obedience to which men should be judged; for long before its publication, the Gospel had been preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). But the law entered that sin might abound: that the extent, the evil, and the desert of sin might be known; for it reaches to the most hidden thoughts of the heart, requires absolute and perfect obedience, and denounces a curse upon all who continue not therein.

To this was subsequently added the ceremonial or levitical law, prescribing a variety of institutions, purifications and sacrifices, the observance of which were, during that dispensation, absolutely necessary to the acceptable worship of God. By obedience to these prescriptions, the people of Israel preserved their legal right to the blessings pronounced to them as a nation, and which were not confined to spiritual worshipers only; and there were likewise ordinances (means) and helps to the blessings promised them as a nation, and which were not confined to spiritual worshipers only; and there were likewise ordinances and helps to lead those who truly loved God, and had conscience of sin, to look forward by faith to the great sacrifice, the Lamb of God, who, in the fullness of time, was to take away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. In both these respects the ceremonial law was abrogated by the death of Christ. The Jews then ceased to be God's peculiar people (nationally); and justice having expiated sin, and brought in everlasting righteousness, by Christ's obedience unto death, all other sacrifices became unnecessary and vain. The Gospel supplies the place of the ceremonial law, to the same advantage as the sun abundantly compensates for the twinkling stars and the feeble shining of the moonlight, which are concealed by its glory. Believers of old were relieved from the strictness of the moral law by the sacrifices which pointed to Christ. Believers under the Gospel are relieved by a direct application to the Blood of the Covenant. Both renounce any dependency upon the moral law for justification, *and both accept it as a rule of life* in the hands of the Mediator, and are enabled to yield it a sincere, though not a perfect obedience.

If an Israelite, trusting in his observance to the moral law, had ventured to reject the ordinances of the ceremonial, he would have been cut off. In like manner, if any who are called Christians are so well satisfied with their moral duties, that they see no necessity of making Christ their only hope, the law, by which they seek life, will be to them a ministration unto death. Christ and He alone, delivers us by faith in His name, from the curse of the law, having been made a curse for us.

The second inquiry is, How we come to know the law to be good? for by nature we do not, we cannot think so. We cannot be at enmity with God, and at the same time approve of His law; rather this is the ground of our dislike to Him, that we conceive the law, by which we are to be judged, is too strict in its precepts, and too severe in its threatenings; and therefore men, so far as in them lies, are for altering this law. They think it would be better if it required no more than we can perform; if it allowed us more liberty, and especially if it was not armed against transgressors with the penalty of eternal punishment. This is evident from the usual pleas of awakened sinners. Some think, "I am not so bad as some others," by which they mean, God will surely make a difference, and take favourable notice of what they suppose good in

themselves. Others plead, “If I should not obtain mercy, what will become of the greater part of mankind!” by which they plainly intimate, that it would be hard and unjust in God to punish such multitudes. Others endeavour to extenuate their sins, as Jonathan once said, “I did but taste a *little* honey, and I must die. These passions are natural to me, and must I die for indulging them?” In short, the spirit and strictness of the law, its severity and its leveling effects, confounding all seeming differences in human characters, and stopping *every* mouth, without distinction, are three properties of the law which the natural man cannot allow to be good.

These prejudices against the law can only be removed by the power of the Holy Spirit. It is His office to enlighten and convince the conscience; to communicate an impression of the majesty, holiness, justice, and authority of the One with whom we have to do, whereby the evil and desert of sin are apprehended. The sinner is then stripped of all his vain pretenses, is compelled to plead guilty, and must justify his Judge even though he should condemn himself. It is His office likewise to discover the grace and glory of the Saviour, as having fulfilled the law for us, and as engaged by promise to enable those who believe in Him to honour it with a due obedience in their own persons. Then a change of judgment takes place, and the sinner consents to the law, that it is holy, just, and good. Then the law is acknowledged to be *holy*; it manifests the holiness of God; and a conformity to it is the perfection of human nature. There can be no excellence in man, but so far as he is influenced by God's law; without it, the greater his natural powers and abilities are, he is but so much the more dangerous and mischievous. It is assented to as *just*, springing from God's indubitable right and authority over His creatures, and suited to their dependence upon Him, and the abilities with which He originally endowed them. And though we, by sin, have lost those abilities (but not our original faculties—A.W.P.), His right remains unalienable; and therefore He can justly punish transgressors. And as it is just in respect to God, so it is *good* for man; his obedience to the law, and the favour of God therein, being his proper happiness; and it is impossible for him to be happy in any other way. Only as I have hinted, to sinners these things *must* be apprehended according to the Gospel, and to their new relation by faith to the Lord Jesus Christ, who has obeyed the law, and made atonement for sin on their behalf; so that through Him they are delivered from condemnation, and entitled to all the benefits of His obedience. From Him likewise they receive the law *as a rule* enforced by His own example, and their unspeakable obligations to His redeeming love. This makes obedience pleasing, and the strength they derive from Him makes it easy.

We may now proceed to enquire in the last place. What is it to use the law lawfully? The expression implies that it may be used unlawfully; and it is so by too many. It is not a lawful use of the law to seek justification and acceptance with God by our obedience to it, because it is not appointed for this end, or capable of answering it, in our circumstances. The very attempt is a daring impeachment of the wisdom and goodness of God; for if righteousness could come by the law, then Christ had died in vain (Gal. 3:21); so that such a hope is not only groundless, but sinful; and when persisted in under the light of the Gospel, is no less than a willful rejection of the grace of God.

Again; it is an unlawful use of the law, that is, an abuse of it, an abuse both of Law and of Gospel, to pretend that its accomplishment by Christ releases believers from any obligation to it as a rule. Such an assertion is not only wicked, but absurd and impossible in the highest degree; for the law is founded in the relation between the Creator and creature, and must unavoidably remain in force so long as that relation

subsists. While He is God, and we are creatures, in every possible or supposable circumstance, He must have an unrivaled claim to our reverence, love, trust, service, and submission. No true believer can possibly admit a thought or wish of being released from his obligation of obedience to God, in whole or in part; he will rather start from it with abhorrence. But Satan labours to drive unstable souls from one extreme to another, and has too often succeeded. Wearied with vain endeavours to keep the law, that they might obtain life by it, and afterwards taking up with a notion of the Gospel devoid of power, they have at length despised that obedience which is the honour of a Christian, and essentially belongs to his character, and have abused the grace of God to licentiousness. But we have not so learned Christ.

To speak affirmatively: the law is lawfully used as a means of conviction of sin. For this purpose it was promulgated at Sinai. The law entered that sin might abound: not to make men more wicked, though occasionally, and by abusing it, it has that effect; but to make them sensible *how wicked* they are. Having God's law in our hands, we are no longer to form our judgment by the maxims and customs of the world, where evil is called good, and good evil; but are to try every principle, temper, and practice by this standard. Could men be prevailed upon to do this, they would soon listen to the Gospel with attention. On some the Spirit of God does thus prevail; then they earnestly make the jailer's enquiry, "What must I do to be saved?" Here the work of grace begins; and the sinner, convicted in his own conscience, is brought to Jesus for life.

Again; when we use the law as a glass, to behold the glory of God, we use it lawfully. His glory is eminently revealed in Christ; but much of it is with a special reference to the law, and cannot be otherwise discovered. We see the perfection and excellence of the law in His life. God was glorified by His obedience as a man. What a perfect character did He exhibit! yet it is no other than a transcript of the law. Such would have been the character of Adam and all his race, had the law been duly obeyed. It appears, therefore, a wise and holy institution, fully capable of displaying that perfection of conduct by which man would have answered the end of his creation. As we see the inviolable strictness of the law in His death, the glory of God in the law is manifested. Though He was the beloved Son, and had yielded personal obedience in the utmost perfection, yet, when He stood in our place, to make atonement for sin, He was not spared. From what He endured in Gethsemane and upon the Cross, we learn the meaning of that awful sentence, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die" (Ezek. 18:4).

Another lawful use of the law is to consult it as a rule and pattern, by which to regulate our spirit and conversation. The grace of God, received by faith, will dispose us to obedience in general; but through remaining darkness and ignorance, we are much at a loss as to particulars. We are, therefore, sent to the law, that we may learn how to walk worthy of God, who has called us to His kingdom and glory; and every precept has its proper place and use.

Lastly, we use the law lawfully when we improve it as a test whereby to judge of the exercise of grace. Believers differ so much from what they once were, and from what many still are, that without this right use of the law, comparing themselves with their former selves, or with others, they would be prone to think more highly of their attainments than they ought. But when they recur to this standard, they sink into the dust, and adopt the language of Job, "Behold I am vile" (40:4), and, "I cannot answer Thee one of a thousand" (9:3).

From hence we may collect, in brief, how the law is good to them that use it lawfully. It furnishes them with a comprehensive and accurate view of the will of God, and the path of duty. By the study of the law, they acquire an habitual spiritual taste of what is right or wrong. The exercised believer, like a skillful workman, has a rule in his hand, whereby he can measure and determine with certainty; whereas others judge, as it were, by the eye, and can only make a random guess, in which they are generally mistaken. It likewise, by reminding them of their deficiencies and short-comings, is a sanctified means of making and keeping them humble; and it exceedingly endears Jesus, the law-fulfiller to their hearts, and puts them in mind of their absolute dependence upon Him every moment.

If these reflections should prove acceptable to you, I have my desire; and I send them to you by the press, in hopes that the Lord may accompany them with His blessing to others. The subject is of great importance, and were it rightly understood, might conduce to settle some of the angry controversies which have been lately agitated. Clearly to understand the distinction, connection, and harmony between the Law, and the Gospel, and their mutual subserviency to illustrate and establish each other, is a singular privilege, and a happy means of preserving the soul from being entangled by errors on the right or the left. I am etc. John Newton, 1765, Author of “Oh for a closer walk with God,” “Amazing Grace, how sweet the sound,” “There is a fountain filled with blood,” etc.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

September, 1933

### **Dangerous Dainties**

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee” (Prov. 23:1). We suppose that this verse has little or no voice for many of our readers, inasmuch as there is scarcely any likelihood *they* will ever be invited to dine with the President of the U.S.A. or the King of Great Britain. Alas that such a thought should find place in any Christian's mind. Alas that the tendency to carnalize God's Word should now be so general. Alas that our spiritual interpreters of the Living Oracles have well-nigh vanished from the earth. Yet even though there be no anointed teacher available to open up the Scriptures, ought it not to be self-evident that the Holy Spirit would never have placed such a verse as this in the Word if it had no application unto the rank and file of God's people? And ought not *that* very consideration cause us to prayerfully seek for its hidden significance?

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.” There are other “rulers” mentioned in Scripture beside *civil* ones. Do we not read of “rulers of the congregation” (Exo. 16:22), the “ruler of the synagogue” (Luke 8:41), as well as the “rulers of the darkness of this world” (Eph. 6:12)? O how necessary it is to compare Scripture with Scripture! And to do that, a good concordance is essential—a book of far greater importance and value for the Christian than a dictionary. But perhaps some carping reader, who has been infected with the subtle poison of “dispensationalism,” objects, “But the 'rulers of the congregation' and of the 'synagogue' were 'Jewish,' and so pertain not to gatherings professedly Christian.” Alright, then turn to Matthew 24:45, where the Lord Jesus spoke of “a faithful and wise servant” whom He hath made “*ruler* over His household.”

It is the last-quoted Scripture which furnishes the key to our present passage, for the purpose why Christ makes him “ruler over His household” (let the P.B.'s carefully take note of the “one man ministry” here!) is “to give them *meat* in due season” (Matt. 24:45). Thus when the Holy Spirit, in Proverbs 23:1, bids us “consider diligently” what is before us when we sit to eat “with a ruler,” He is referring to an *ecclesiastical* “ruler” or preacher. Now, not all of the religious “rulers” in Christendom today have been appointed by God. No indeed, far from it. Personally the writer very much doubts if two out of each thousand of the preachers, ministers, and missionaries, the world over, have been *Divinely* called! Many of them are self-appointed, some of them sent out by men, most of them raised up by Satan.

The attentive reader of the Old and New Testaments will find that the false prophets have, in every age, greatly outnumbered the true. It is for this reason that God commands us to “believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because *many* false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). Thus the admonition given in Proverbs 23:1 has always been a timely one for God's people to pay strict attention unto, and perhaps it was never more needful to give heed unto it than in the degenerate and apostate time in which *our* lot is cast. The preaching we listen to, and in measure absorb, has precisely the same effect upon our souls, as does the food we eat have upon our bodies: if wholesome, it is nutritious; if injurious, it works harm.

“When thou sittest to eat with a ruler, consider diligently what is before thee.” The tragic thing is that many of God's own children today are so unspiritual, and therefore so spiritually ignorant, that *they know not how* TO “consider diligently” what is set “before them.” They know not what tests to apply, nor how to examine what they hear. So long as the preacher is “orthodox” and approved by those whom they consider “sound in the Faith,” they think his message is alright. So long as the preacher holds to the “fundamentals” of the Faith, they suppose that he is a true servant of God. So long as the preacher sticks close to the letter of Scripture, they imagine their souls are being fed with the sincere milk of the Word. Alas for the credulity of such unwary souls.

Is the reader ready to ask, “But what *other* tests are we to apply?” Let us help you to answer your own question by asking another. *What* criterion do you apply to the material food you eat? Are you satisfied if it has been prepared and cooked according to the best culinary books? Of course not. The chief thing is, *what effect* does your food produce? Does it agree with or upset your digestive system? Does it promote or injure your health? We are agreed, are we not? Very good, now apply the same rule or test unto the spiritual—or, we should say, more correctly, the “religious”—food of which you are partaking; *what effect* is it having upon your character and conduct, what is it producing in your heart and life?

But we must not stop there with a mere generalization. If souls are to be helped today, the servant of God must be precise, and enter into details. Ponder carefully these questions, dear reader. Does the preaching you listen to come home to your heart in the power of the Holy Spirit? If not, what is the use of hearing it? Does the preaching you hear pierce you, search your conscience, condemn you, and make you cry, “O wretched man that I am”? Or does it add to your store of intellectual knowledge, minister to your complacency, and make you feel self-satisfied? Do not treat these questions lightly, we beg you, or you are very likely to prove your own worst enemy. Face them fairly and squarely, as in the presence of God.

“Consider *diligently*” what is set before thee from the pulpit, for it *must* do one of two things: help or harm you. It either promotes humility, or feeds pride. It either stimulates to work out your own salvation “with fear and trembling,” or it fosters carnal security and self-confidence. It either drives you to your knees, or it more and more lulls your spiritual sensibilities. It either makes you more conscientious and careful about all the details of your daily life, or more careless and callous. It either causes you to cry unto God day and night for Him to work in your heart a deeper and more constant hatred of evil, or (probably unconsciously) leads you to think more lightly of sin—excusing “little” failures, and consoling yourself with the thought that none of us reach perfection in this life; whereas God says, “Be ye holy in *all* manner of conversation” or “behaviour” (1 Peter 1:15).

“And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite” (Prov. 23:2). This is strong language, is it not? Yes, and the subject calls for it. So very few realize the fearful consequences which follow from a disregard of that command of Christ's, “*Take heed* what ye hear” (Mark 4:24). False doctrine has the same effect upon the soul as poison does upon the body. But Satan appeals to the pride of so many, and succeeds in making them believe *they* are immune, that they are so “well established in the Truth” that listening to error cannot injure them. Therefore does the Holy Spirit say, “*Be not deceived*: evil communications corrupt good manners” (1 Cor. 15:33): not they may, but DO! Yes, even though you are quite unaware of it.

“And put a knife to thy throat, if thou be a man given to appetite.” This is plainly a word of warning for those who are consumed with curiosity to hear every new “evangelist” or “Bible-teacher” who comes to town; those who have an insatiable appetite to sample every religious “feast” (?) that is spread in their community. *That* is what is meant by “a man given to appetite”: one who craves to hear the latest pulpit or platform sensationalist. To all such God says, Take yourself in hand, and use no half measures to check this dangerous tendency. It is at your imminent peril you disregard this Divine admonition. If you disobey, Satan will either slay you, or else drug and put you soundly to sleep.

“Be not desirous of his dainties: for they are deceitful meat” (Prov. 23:3). Yes, he has “dainties” to offer you: that is why so many are attracted to his table. These “dainties” are skillfully varied to meet different tastes. For “prophetic students” they are spicy items from the newspapers, served under the name of “signs of the times.” But these are “deceitful meat,” for they leave the soul starved and barren: there is *no spiritual* nutriment in them! For the energetic young people, there is a pleasing presentation of “Christian service,” calling upon them to engage in “work for the Lord”: these too are “deceitful meat,” for they neither edify (build up) nor lead to a closer walking with Christ; instead, they take the eye *off Christ*, unto the “perishing multitudes”: as though God were unable to save His own elect without *our* assistance! “Keep *thy* heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23) is God's word unto you.

For others there is a regular exposition of “*our* doctrines” which are indeed “dainties” unto those of a theological turn of mind. “Yes, but 'our doctrines' are *Scripture* doctrines, and surely *they* cannot be 'deceitful meat'!” Ah dear friend, Satan frequently transforms himself into “an angel of light”; he knows full well that no harm will be done unto *his* cause while doctrinal dissertations are addressed to the intellect, and the conscience is not searched. Unless there be a *practical application* made of each Scripture doctrine, the heart is not touched nor the soul humbled; instead, pride is fed and the head is

merely stuffed with a theoretical knowledge of the Truth. Mark this well: doctrine *divorced from* experimental and practical preaching is highly injurious!

What the writer and reader most need is not “dainties,” but “bitter herbs” (Exo. 12:8) to purge us of pride, independency, self-love! We need to be fed “with the bread of tears” (Psa. 80:5) and “the water of affliction” (Isa. 30:20). Only that ministry truly helps which causes us to mourn before God, which brings us into the dust, which makes us loathe ourselves. Perhaps some will reply, “I want a ministry where *Christ* is exalted.” Good; but do you relish a ministry which gives you to see how *un-Christlike* you are in your ways, how little you are following the example which He has left us? A faithful and well-balanced ministry of “Christ” includes His teaching upon Discipleship, His claims and demands upon us, His precepts and warnings. Beware of flesh-pleasing “dainties,” dear reader.

We pass over the intervening ones and come to verse 8 of Proverbs 23, “The morsel which thou hast eaten shalt thou vomit up, and lose thy sweet words.” Yes, if you are really a child of God, *this* is what the Spirit will, sooner or later, work in you. He will yet make your heart nauseated with those flesh-pleasing “dainties” which you now so much relish; He will yet cause *you* to turn with disgust from that which the empty professors feed upon with such avidity. We speak from painful experience. Sheep cannot thrive on that which goats eat! If your preacher is admired and eulogized by white-washed worldlings, you may be certain that his ministry cannot help you. If large crowds enthusiastically hear him, it is a sure sign that he is not ministering the Word in the power of the Spirit!

In closing, let us point out that all we have said above about “considering diligently” what preaching you attend, applies with equal force to listening-in to the radio! “*Take heed* what ye hear”: if it does not make your conscience more tender, it will make it more callous. The same applies to your *reading*. The great majority of the “orthodox” and “sound” magazines being printed today, can only *harm* you, for they contain nothing to make you weep before God, nothing to increase the “fear of the Lord” in your soul, nothing that will lead to an increasing mortifying of your members which are upon the earth. If you have proven this to be the case, then from now on *shun them* as you would a plague. “Cease ye from man” (Isa. 2:22) and feed upon the Word.—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

October, 1933

### Heart Work

We now resume at the point where we left off in our last article.

Second, it is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under affliction, to call to mind that our own *Father* has the ordering of them: not a creature can move either hand or tongue against us, but by His permission. Suppose the cup be a bitter one which He has given thee to drink, still there is no poison in it. Hath not God said, "I will do you no hurt" (Jer. 25:6)! If you be really one of His children thou liest too near Him to injure thee. Thy highest good is ever before Him, and though He spares not the rod when we need it, yet it is *love* which wields it (Heb. 12:6). Suppose a faithful and tender-hearted physician had studied well the case of a patient, and had prescribed the most excellent remedies to spare his life; would he not be grieved to hear him cry out "you have poisoned me," because it gripes and pains him in the operation? Quell then those groundless and unreasonable suspicions of the designs of the Great Physician.

Third, though God hath reserved unto Himself the right to afflict His people, yet He has pledged Himself not to take His lovingkindness from them: "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psa. 89:30-33). Can I look that Scripture in the face with a murmuring or repining spirit? O naughty heart! doest thou well to be discontented when God hath given thee the whole tree, with all its clusters of comfort, because He suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves! Christians

have both spiritual blessings and temporal mercies, the one abiding, the other movable: since God has eternally secured the former, never let thy heart be troubled at the loss of the latter.

Fourth, may it not be that by these humbling providences God is now accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited for? If so, is it not foolish to be worried over the same? You have asked Him to refine your soul, to conform you more unto the image of Christ, to deliver you from the power of sin, to discover unto you the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature, to so mortify your worldly and fleshly lusts that you might find all your enjoyment and satisfaction in Christ. Then by these impoverishing strokes God is now fulfilling thy desires. Wouldst thou be delivered from temptation? then He has hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the vanity of the creature? He has now revealed it to thy experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? He has taken away the food and fuel that maintained them. As prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest in the bosom of God? He has pulled from under thy head the soft pillow of creature-delights on which before you rested!

Finally, if like Rebekah of old, thou still refusest to be comforted or quieted, then consider one thing more, which if it be seriously pondered will doubtless still thy soul. Compare the condition you are now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with that of the damned! Some of those you used to associate and make merry with are now wailing and gnashing their teeth under the scourge of Divine vengeance. They are roaring amid the unquenchable flames of Hell; and deservedst not *thou* to be among them! O my friend, your present lot, no matter how unpleasant it be, cannot for a moment be compared with theirs. How gladly would they change places with you. Let the knowledge that your sins deserved eternal torment make you thank God heartily for a crust of bread and a cup of water.

3. *In times of Public Danger.* We do not wish to be an alarmist, or needlessly excite the fear of our readers, but judging from God's ways in the past, it would seem quite likely that social upheavals, and the menacing of property and life, are not far distant. We say this, not merely because of the discontent which is now seething within the lower and rougher elements, nor because that tens of thousands, feeling so severely the pinch of poverty, are being driven to the point of desperation, but because so very few professing Christians have yet humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and evidenced any godly sorrow for their past extravagances, or show any marked reformation in their lives today. One wonders how much distress and suffering it will take before the haughty are humbled, and before those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will give Him the place which is His right in their hearts and lives.

There can be no social revolution, no setting at defiance of established law and order, while the restraining hand of God curbs the wilder passions of men. The Almighty has perfect control of all His creatures, and therefore His people are bidden to pray “for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may *lead a quiet and peaceable life* in all godliness and honesty” (1 Tim. 2:2)—such a petition would be useless were not the helm of all events held by the hand of the Lord. And it is for the sake of His own elect that God prevents the reprobate from turning this world into bedlum and shambles. But if His own people have wandered so far from Him as not to have His ear, if they will not repent of and turn away from their wicked ways now that His chastening hand is lightly laid upon them, then He will most probably resort to

far sterner measures, and *force them to their knees*.

He who reads with any degree of attention the history of Israel, especially that portion of it recorded in the book of Judges, will see that God had to employ drastic means to turn them from their idols. So too he who has any fair acquaintance with the history of the “Christian” nations of Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, will discover there several solemn illustrations of the same principle. And it seems to the writer that something more than an industrial depression, something more than financial straitness and flu epidemics, will be required to bring to an end the present frightful desecration of the Holy Sabbath, the brazen immodesty which stalks through the land, the spirit of lawlessness which abounds on every side. God may soon unleash the hounds of anarchy! Suppose He does: that would be another critical hour wherein we would need to exercise special care over our hearts. “Hear for the time to come” (Isa. 42:23)!

In times of danger and public distraction the stoutest souls are apt to be surprised by slavish fear. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, and on earth distress of nations, with perplexity, then the hearts of men fail them for fear, and the looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luke 21:25, 26). But it should not be thus with the saints: they ought to be of a more raised spirit. Those who are walking with God, may say “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. *Therefore will not we fear*, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled” (Psa. 46:1-3). With David they will exclaim, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psa. 27:1). How, then, may a Christian preserve his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great or threatening danger?

First, even then *all* creatures are in the directing hand of God, and can only move as *He* permits them. Let this truth be well settled by faith in the heart, and it will have a marvelous quieting effect upon it. A lion at large is a terrible creature to meet, but not so when he is in the keeper's hand. Dreadful indeed will it be if a time of Bolshevism should break loose in this land, but even so He who rules Heaven and earth shall say, “Thus far shalt thou come, and no further.” Even then, my brother or sister, God would still be your *Father*, and much more tender toward you than you are unto yourself. Let me ask the most nervous woman whether there would not be a vast difference between a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and the same sword in the hand of a loving husband? As great a difference is there in looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them as in the hand of your God by an eye of faith.

Second, urging upon yourself the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let thy soul stand in awe of the violation of them. The Son of God has charged you, “When ye shall hear of wars *and commotions*, be not terrified” (Luke 21:9); then cry unto Him for supernatural grace to obey. “In nothing terrified by your adversaries” (Phil. 1:28). Three times over in Matthew 10:26-31 Christ commands us *not to fear* “men.” Does the voice of a creature make thee tremble, and shall not the voice of God. If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the plain commands of Christ? Surely *His* word should have more power to calm thee than the voice of a poor worm of the earth to terrify. “I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?” (Isa. 51:12).

Third, consult the many precious promises which are recorded for your support and comfort in all dangers: these are the refuges to which you may fly and be safe. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies. “Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways” (Psa. 91:5-11). “Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee” (Isa. 43:1, 2).

Finally, make sure of the eternal interest of thy soul in the hands of Jesus Christ: when *that* is done, then you may say, Now world do thy worst. You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you know that it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. “And I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do” (Luke 12:4). If you are truly and Scripturally assured that your spirit will be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation the moment of its dismissal from the body, trouble not yourself about the instruments and means of its dismissal. “O but a violent death is terrible to nature”! But what matter is it when thy soul is in Heaven whether it be let out at thy mouth or thy throat? whether thy familiar friends or barbarous enemies close thy dead eyes? Thy soul in Heaven shall not be conscious of how thy body is abused on earth.

Fourth, in times of Zion's trouble it behooves public and tender hearts to be delivered from sinking into despondency and despair. When we see the once fair gardens of the Church, with their hedges broken down, the boar running wild therein, the flowers replaced by weeds, it makes a godly soul cry, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears” (Jer. 9:1). Yes, but remember, no trouble befalls Zion, but by the permission of Zion's God, and He permits nothing out of which He will not bring much good at last. Moreover, “there *must be* also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest” (1 Cor. 11:19). Again, lay hold of and persistently plead before God His promise: “When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him” (Isa. 59:19). However low the Church may be plunged under the waters of adversity, it shall assuredly rise again.

Fifth, how may a Christian keep his heart from *revengeful motives* under the greatest injuries and abuses of men? First, urge upon thy soul the express commands of God: remember that this is forbidden fruit, no matter how pleasant to our vitiated appetites. Revenge is sweet, says nature; the effects thereof shall be bitter, says God. How plainly has God prohibited this flesh-pleasing sin: “Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work” (Prov. 24:29); “Avenge not yourselves” (Rom. 12:19). But that is not all: “If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink” (Prov. 25:21). One of the many proofs of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures is that they forbid revenge which is so sweet to nature. Then awe thy heart by the authority of God in those Scriptures.

Second, set before thy soul the blessed and binding example of Christ: never did any suffer more and greater abuses from men than did the Saviour, and never was any one so peaceful and forgiving: “When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously” (1 Peter 2:23). To be of a meek and gracious spirit is to be Christ-like. Third, calm thy heart by the realization that by revenge thou dost but satisfy a lust, but by forgiving thou shalt conquer a lust. Again; consider more frequently how often you wrong God, and then you will not be so easily enflamed against those who wrong thee. Do you still reply, But such insults and injustices are more than flesh and blood can stand? then earnestly seek *supernatural* grace.

Sixth, how may a Christian preserve his heart from utterly sinking in seasons of spiritual gloom and the hidings of God's face? Turn unto the cheering promises which God has left on record for His backslidden people: Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4, etc. No matter what your sin or trouble be, let it drive you *to* God, and not from Him: cry with David, “Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great” (Psa. 25:11). But suppose I can obtain no access to God, no conscious help from His Spirit, and find no ray of hope for my poor heart? Then heed this word, “Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and *hath no light*? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God” (Isa. 50:10).

Seventh, how may the Christian, in a time of critical illness, get his heart loose from all earthly engagements and *persuade it unto a willingness to die*? First, by reminding himself that death has lost its sting (1 Cor. 15:55) and cannot harm him. Second, by considering what heavy burdens he will then be rid of. The soul pays a dear rent for the house it now lives in! But death frees the saint not only from all the troubles and trials of this life, not only from all the sufferings and pains of the body, but it delivers from all spiritual diseases—“he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Justification destroys its damning power, sanctification its reigning power, but glorification its very being and existence. At death the Christian is done forever with Satan and his temptations: then how heartily should he welcome it!—A.W.P.

(For much in this article we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel.)

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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October, 1933

### **Hearing the Rod** (Micah 6:9)

“Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). How can it be otherwise, living as he is in a world which is under the curse that Adam's sin entailed, and, what is worse, under God's judgment because of its casting out of His beloved Son. Yet the subject of “trouble” needs to be “rightly divided” if we are to properly heed that exhortation, “Be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17), an important part of which consists in understanding the meaning and message of our Father to us in all the “trouble” which we encounter and experience.

As we turn to the Holy Scriptures for light upon this subject of Trouble, Suffering, Affliction, Tribulation, Persecution, etc., we discover two distinct and different lines of Truth thereon, running all through the Word. On the one hand we read that, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22), parallel with which are such passages as Luke 6:26, 2 Timothy 3:12, etc. But on the other hand, we read that “the curse causeless shall not come (Prov. 26:2), that God does not “afflict willingly” (Lam. 3:33), and that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). Much of the “trouble” and “affliction” experienced by us, we bring upon ourselves, through our own folly. We see this plainly exemplified in the natural realm: how many are now suffering bodily ills through intemperate eating and drinking; how many are nervous wrecks as the result of “burning the candle at both ends”?

The same principle holds good in the spiritual realm: the chastening rod of God is upon many of His

children because of their self-will and self-pleasing: some of them are passing through sore financial straits because their “sins have *withholden*” God's temporal mercies (Jer. 5:25); still others, who have been favoured with clear and definite light from God as to a certain course of duty—e.g. separating themselves from religious associations which dishonour Christ—and because they have not *walked* therein, the Lord has “hedged up their way with *thorns*” (Hosea 2:6). Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to draw the inference that every time we see a suffering Christian, we behold one who has seriously displeased God, and therefore is now being severely chastised by Him. It would be wrong to form such a conclusion concerning *every* case, because trouble and suffering issue from *other* causes and are sent by God for other purposes than the reproof of sin—sent sometimes to experimentally fit the recipient for greater and higher usefulness in the service of Christ: compare 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Now from what has been pointed out above, it should be quite clear that real exercise of heart is called for from each one of us whenever painful trials come upon us; that we need to get down before God, and cry, “*show* me wherefore Thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2). To take *this* attitude is the part of wisdom, for *if* God be dealing with us over something that has displeased Him, and we fail to humble ourselves before Him and learn of Him *what* it is which is now choking the channel of His highest blessings toward us, and obtain grace from Him to put right what is wrong, then the chastening “profits” us not, and further and increased chastisement must be our portion: for it is not until we are “*exercised* thereby,” exercised *in conscience*, that we have any promise it *will* issue in “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

*If* the “trouble” through which we are passing at any period of our lives *be* a reproof from God because of our sins or unfaithfulness, and instead of *suspecting* that He *is* displeased with us and taking our place in the dust before Him, begging Him to put His finger on the festering sore in our hearts: if instead, we proudly imagine that there is *nothing* wrong in our lives, that we have given God no cause to smite us, and complacently assume that we are suffering *only* for “righteousness' sake,” and draw comfort from such promises as Matthew 5:11, 12, we are deceived by Satan, and are but “*forsaking* our own mercy” (Jonah 2:8). It is written, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Prov. 28:13). Thus, whenever “trouble” comes upon a Christian it is *always* the safest policy to come to the Lord and say, “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24).

From what has been said above, it will be seen that it often falls to the lot of God's servants to perform a duty which is most unpleasant to the flesh. When they come into contact with a Brother or Sister who is passing through deep waters, their *natural* desire is to administer *comfort*, but in some instances (at least) to do so would be guilty of “healing also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly”: and *how* is this done? The same verse tells us, by “saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). That was what the “*false* prophets” had done to Israel, and *that* was the very thing which carnal Israel desired: their demand was, “Prophesy *not* unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth* things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10), and human nature has not changed since then!

It is the thankless task for any true servant of Christ today to be *faithful* to his Master, and faithful to the souls of those with whom he deals. Not that God requires him to think the *worst* of every case that comes to his notice, but that it is his bounden duty to exhort each one to act on Job 10:2. But if he does do so, he may be assured at the beginning, that in the majority of cases he will be looked upon as harsh,

hypercritical, unkind, like one of Job's censorious comforters; for there are few indeed who have an *honest* heart, are ready to know the worst about themselves, and are willing to be cut by the knife of God's Word. The great majority want *only* comfort, the “promises” of Scripture, the message of “Peace, peace.”

But do not the Promises of God belong unto His children? Certainly they do: but here too “there is a season, and a time to every purpose” (Eccl. 3:1): there is a time when we may *rightfully* draw consolation and strength from the promises, and there is a time when we may *not* legitimately do so. When all is right between our souls and God, when every known sin has been confessed, *and* forsaken in sincere purpose of heart, then may we righteously draw milk from the breasts of Divine consolation. But just as there are times when it would be injurious for us to eat some of the things we do when we are well, so to take unto ourselves comfort from the Divine Promises while sin is cherished in our hearts, is baneful and sinful.

The above (now slightly revised) was recently sent by us in a letter to one passing through deep waters. It occurred to us that it might be a timely word for others. Many are now in the fiery furnace, and few indeed are there capable of speaking to them a word in season. It is not sufficient to bid them “Trust in God,” and assure them that brighter days are ahead. The *conscience* needs to be searched; the wound must be probed and cleansed before it is ready for the “balm of Gilead”; we must *humble ourselves* “under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6), if we are to be exalted again by Him in “due time.” May the Lord be pleased to bless the above unto some of “his own”:—correspondence on spiritual matters welcome.—A.W.P.

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### **Delusions Discovered**

To the editors of the Gospel Standard: If you will bear with me, I will write a few of the feelings that have passed, from time to time, in my soul, and some little account of the way in which I hope the Lord has led me.

From a child, I seemed to have some kind of fear of God; so that I could not follow sin and wickedness as others, in external acts; and I was obliged to keep away from ungodly characters. Being a teacher in the Church of England school, I was obliged to teach the children the awful lies in their Catechism. Here I continued for some years, attending the church, and passing, in the eyes of many, for a Christian. I went amongst the Independents a little while, and was a strict hearer there. I was noticed by many of them as a very pious young man, and a child of God. Thus I heard their preachers, and thought them all dear men of God.

Hearing my mother, who is, I believe a gracious woman, converse with two of my sisters about the things of God; hearing her tell of her experience, how she had been bound down under the curse of the law for twelve years, expecting nothing but Hell; how she had envied the very beasts of the field, because they had no soul to appear before God; how she had gone to bed, many times, afraid to shut her eyes in sleep lest she should awake in Hell; and how the Lord had appeared to her, and washed away all her sins, by a blessed manifestation of pardon through the blood and righteousness of Christ made known to her soul; and hearing, also, a blessed account of the way in which the Lord led some of my sisters, I began to see

that I knew nothing about real religion, and that the parson of the parish church bore no marks of a man of God; nor could I find any of the Church people, nor scarcely any among the Independents, or any of their preachers, near me, that could give an account of the real work of grace in their souls.

I afterwards attended a little chapel in the town, though the people who attended it were hated by the mere professors of religion. My mother being a member there, I became a constant hearer. The men who preached there appeared to me to be wonderful men. They preached eternal election, particular redemption, that salvation was all of grace, and that none could be saved but those that were everlastingly chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. I felt a great pleasure in hearing these men, as they preached doctrinal truths very clearly from the letter of the Word, and much of the bright side of the experience of a child of God; and I was often melted down into tears under their preaching. I now became very zealous for the Truth, and could read my Bible from morning till night, and thought that I had a great insight into the Truth. I thought that I must be a child of God, because I was such a constant hearer of the Word preached, and had, as I thought, such wonderful zeal for God and for His Truth, and lived such a good life that no one could bring anything against my character. I continued, for some time, in this state; and passed, in the eyes of some of the children of God, as one that was born of God. I still increased in zeal and head-knowledge, until I thought myself almost fit to stand up in a pulpit.

Soon after this, it pleased the Lord to raise up a faithful servant and send him amongst us. I heard J.W., a real heart-searching minister. He began to pull down my false hopes and counterfeit religion, and drew a line of distinction, not only between the sheep and the goats, but a searching separation between a Calvinistic sheep and a Calvinistic goat, and opened up the delusions of the day. He said that a man may know all the doctrines of the Bible, and have a wonderful insight into them, so that he may preach and explain them very clearly from the letter of the Word, yet never have a spark of grace in his soul; and that whatever a man's religion was, if he had never been brought down under the mighty hand of God, and never had the Law of God applied, more or less, with a supernatural power, to his conscience, nor had all his false hopes and false religion burned up and destroyed, nor been brought down a ruined wretch to the feet of Jesus, with groans, sighs, cries, and tears for a manifestation of pardon through the precious atoning blood of Christ made known to his soul by an inward experience, he will be lost to all eternity.

Hearing such things as these, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, for sometime, I began to see and feel things very differently from what I ever did before. I saw that I had never stepped one step in the path of life; that I had never possessed one grain of grace in my soul; that I had made lies my refuge, hid myself under false pretenses, and made an agreement with death, and a covenant with Hell; that I knew nothing of the Law, nor of the Gospel; that I had never been killed nor made alive, wounded nor healed, stripped nor clothed, made poor nor made rich; that I had never been brought down nor raised up; that I had a name to live, while my soul was dead before God, dead in sins, dead in a profession, and dead under the curse of God's righteous Law; yet knew it not, being blindfolded by the devil, and led captive at his will in a graceless profession. I saw that free will was no more than a spider's web to rest my never-dying soul upon, and that doctrines in the head, without grace, were no better. I saw that all my reading of the Bible and various religious books, all my attendance at places of worship from a child, all my zeal and head-knowledge, and all my prayers, were nothing but a mass of hypocrisy, deceit and self-righteousness. I saw that there were thousands in Hell that had gone as far as I had in a profession of religion, and yet had died under the wrath

of God. O how my soul went out after God in sighs, and groans, and wrestlings, that He would show mercy to such a wretch as I!

I saw that the Lord would be just if He cut me off and sent me to Hell. And O how my very soul hated hypocrisy and the delusions of my past life! I many times begged the Lord to drag me, in my feelings, through the very belly of Hell, rather than let me live and die a hypocrite. O how my soul went out after the Lord in longing desires that He would appear as my God; that He would show mercy unto one so vile; and that He would lead me to Gethsemane, there to see, by precious faith, a slaughtered Jesus, bleeding for my transgressions and dying that I might live, and that by His death, I might have everlasting life beyond the grave. O that the Lord would apply these things to my conscience! O for one spark of Divine life in my soul! O for one grain of precious faith! O for one drop of atoning blood, and an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ! I saw that the Commandment was exceedingly broad, and that I should soon enter the woeful abode of endless night, unless I were saved by the matchless grace of God, and a salvation brought home, applied, and made known to my soul by His mighty power. All my false hopes of Heaven, all my fleshly zeal, all my counterfeit faith and all my head-knowledge of the Word of God appeared to be nothing but delusion; and I felt myself, in some little measure, in my real state, a lost, ruined, perishing sinner, without hope and without help in myself, and a poor, naked, needy, guilty, bankrupt beggar, and that I must forever lie in Hell, under the wrath of a just God, unless I have an experimental knowledge of my eternal election and interest in the Person, life and death of Christ, so that my soul may not be found naked at the great and awful Day.

I feel assured that Christ died for all the elect, and no others; but this will not satisfy my soul. I want a personal knowledge that *I* am one of the elect brought home to my soul with a living power, that I may know that I am born again of the blessed Spirit, by having His kingdom set up in my heart, so as to feel assured that He is my Lord and my God, and my everlasting portion beyond the grave. O Thou great, unchangeable God, when wilt Thou arise and shine into my soul, and bless me with this sweet hope in Thy mercy, that I may feel the precious atoning blood of Christ applied unto me? This is what my soul wants; this is what it longs for.

Sometimes I have felt my soul sweetly drawn out after the Lord, under the preaching of the Word, when the servant of the Lord has been led by the blessed Spirit to trace out the feelings of the poor, the outcast, the desolate, the needy, the hopeless, and the helpless in themselves; and I have gone into the fields, under the ricks of corn, and over the hills to some lonesome downs, where no human eye could see me, nor ear hear me, and poured out my soul unto the Lord, with cries and tears, that He would reveal Himself to my soul, and show me His dear hands, and feet, and side, that I might say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God"; and that He would say unto me, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." I exclaimed, "This is what I want. Do not be angry; but grant me my petition, O Lord! I feel that I shall be lost forever, unless I am saved in Thee with an everlasting salvation. I deserve not the least of all Thy mercies; I deserve nothing but Hell; and canst Thou, wilt Thou have mercy on such a wretch?" Thus I have in tears poured out the feelings of my soul unto the Lord, until my poor body has been wearied with the exercise of my soul, yet I have felt some sweetness in pouring out my soul unto Him, and have returned home with a "who can tell but the Lord may yet appear, and bless me with the pardon of all my sins?"

No preaching will do for me now, but such as is sound, searching, and experimental, and brought home with power to my soul. Christ in the letter, and a letter religion, will not do for me now. My soul seeks for realities, power, life, and feeling. Salvation felt, handled, and tasted in my soul is what I long to experience. Many times have I cried out in the language of David, "Search me, O God! and try me." I have asked the Lord to see whether I have any evil end in view, and supplicated Him to lead me in the way everlasting. I have begged Him to bring me to the light, and show unto me my real character and the very ground of my heart, that I might never be resting in a false hope, and never be building on a false foundation; but that I might be sifted and driven out of every refuge of lies, and be brought to the light, that I might have my real state opened to my view as I stand before God. O how I could bless and praise the matchless name of the Lord, that He hath not cut me off whilst I was a stranger to Him, in an ungodly profession; but that He had, in some little measure, opened my eyes to see, and my heart to feel the awful state in which I was!

Since I have felt these things, a secret hope sometimes rises up in my mind, that had the blessed Lord meant to destroy me, He would not have shown me those things; that He would not have implanted His fear in my soul, (as I hope He has), nor have brought me to see and feel all my righteousness, all my good works, and all my bad works, to be as filthy rags; and that He would not have caused me to groan and pant, long and sigh for the precious imputed righteousness and atoning blood of Christ to be applied to my soul. I have seen that all real religion was supernatural, and came from God, and from God alone; and that unless I had this real, vital religion brought with supernatural power into my conscience, and experimentally enjoyed the pardon of all my sins, by an internal manifestation of the precious blood and righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit, I rested in a refuge of lies. O how my soul did long and pant after these things to be experimentally felt in my heart! What desire I have felt towards the blessed Redeemer! I have felt that I could leave father and mother, house and land, gold and silver, anything and everything that this world calls good or great; I felt that I could leave all for Christ's sake and die for His honour and glory, would He but manifest Himself to me.

Some times on a Lord's Day, the faithful servant of God has entered into the feeling of my soul in such a manner that I have been constrained to bless and praise the name of the Lord for sending such a one amongst us; one whose face was set as a flint, and who stood as an iron pillar and as a brazen wall against the deceitful religion of the day; one that has been led into the everlasting distinction between the elect and the reprobate; one that has separated the precious from the vile, cast up the high-way, and lifted up a standard to the people; one that had been experimentally led into the footsteps of the flock, and experimentally traced out the experience of gracious souls; and one that had been led into the deep things of God and deep soul-trouble, that he might bring out the poor dear children of God, and speak of the path as he experimentally passed through it. While he was speaking from these words, "For in a time accepted have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation," O the wonderful things that he was enabled to bring out of them, as the mouth of God to my soul! As soon as he began to preach, the words dropped into my soul, melted my hard heart, crumbled me into nothing, and laid me in the dust; all my fears were gone, and a sweet hope sprang up in my soul. O the beauty, power, life, and feeling that seemed to clothe the words which dropped from his lips! My soul was, as it were, melted with love to the ever-blessed Jehovah, and to the minister as His servant. I felt a sweet calm in my soul for some time. How worthless were the things of

this world to me! I felt that I could leave it and ten thousand other worlds for the name and sake of a precious Christ. But these feelings did not last long; and “I to my own sad state returned”; yet I sometimes feel encouraged under the ministry of the Word, and sweet nearness to the Lord in my daily walks, and whilst working in the fields.

O with what weight have these things lain, at times, on my mind, when I have looked around me, and have seen flocks of goats, wolves, and hypocrites, flocking backwards and forwards to and from the Popish churches and chapels, with merry and cheerful countenances! I cannot describe with my pen what I have often felt for them. They have caused me many gloomy moments. I feel assured that all the elect of God would be brought out from amongst them, and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, before they close their eyes in death; but when I have heard of professor after professor dropping out of time into eternity, without the least shadow of a true Gospel hope, I have had many searchings of heart, and humbling of soul, and cries unto the Lord that He would lead me into that blessed path which leads to Heaven.

But, to conclude. There is still wanting in my soul the witness of the blessed Spirit, witnessing to my spirit the full assurance of the pardon of my sins, so as to give me full satisfaction. This is what I have long sought after with many cries and tears unto the Lord; but I find that by all my wrestlings, strugglings, and cries, I cannot put myself amongst the *manifested* children of God; for I have no power nor might, nor spiritual strength of my own. I am a poor, vile, Hell-deserving wretch, and daily feel the evil workings of my base heart, and the awful abominations which are done in the land of my soul. A Lover of the Truth, 1843.

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### Credulous Simpletons

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Prov. 14:15). As we all know, there is a class of people who are so gullible that they believe almost everything they hear, every story that is told, every promise that is made them. They are easily imposed upon, for they do not think for themselves, and never properly outgrow their infancy. Thoroughly unsophisticated, they are ready victims for any retailers of fairy-tales who come along. But there is another class which, concerning natural things, are more cautious and on their guard; who instead of crediting every tale require proof, and who instead of forming estimates by the first glance of the eye, examine things carefully.

This second class to which reference has just been made is, in the affairs of the world, particular, shrewd, not easily imposed upon. We say “in the affairs of the world,” for when it comes to things concerning their eternal destiny, many of this very class are, strange to say, most credulous and easily duped. In matters concerning their never-dying souls, they throw caution to the winds, stifle any suspicions they might have, cease to examine things with due care, and allow themselves to be deceived. Let a man styling himself an “evangelist” come to their community, and they will flock to hear him; let him affirm that he believes the Bible to be God's word, Christ to be God's Son, and faith in His blood to be God's way of salvation, and he is at once received as “orthodox.”

Satisfied thus of the “evangelist's” orthodoxy, they are as ready to receive what he presents, as the poor heathen are to blindly follow what their “priests” tell them. Or, just as those born in Papist families

pliantly yield unto the awful dogma that the Virgin Mary is to be worshipped, so others reared by those belonging to a Protestant denomination which teach that water baptism is requisite in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, mechanically assent thereto. In like manner, if others sit under a preacher who tells them “All that is necessary in order to salvation is to believe in Christ,” thousands of credulous simpletons believe *him*, to their eternal undoing. Yea, we greatly fear that not a few readers of this Magazine, if they received a letter from the editor addressing them as “Dear Brother” or “Dear Sister,” would be likely to exclaim, “Well, if Brother Pink thinks I am a Christian, there is no need for me to worry about it.” Yes, “the simple believeth every word.”

There is no doubt in the writer's mind that one of the factors contributing much unto the babel of tongues now existing in Christendom, is the gullibility of the public. Almost any man (or woman) can start a new religion today: providing he has a pleasing personality, a forceful delivery, or a sensational message, he is sure of a following. Again, the conflicting sects already in existence are perpetuated because so many of their adherents blindly accept some man's say so, believing *their* “church's” interpretation of the Scriptures, instead of prayerfully searching the Word for themselves. Here too we have the explanation of why so many are in a state of mental confusion, knowing not “whom to believe” or “what to believe.” They hear one preacher after another, attend this Bible conference and that, read numerous magazines and books; and finding the speakers and writers differing so much, these credulous simpletons know not where they stand.

Now this feverish rushing around from “church” to “church,” this readiness to accept almost anything that is heard or read, this lightness of belief, is a most dangerous thing. God has bidden His people to “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because *many* false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1); and “Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21). O how great is the need for so doing: never more requisite and urgent than in these evil days. How often does that warning occur in the New Testament, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matt. 24:4; Eph. 5:6; 1 John 3:7 etc.) To take things on trust is the height of folly. Emulate those spoken of in Acts. 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things *were* so.”

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” Not only does he measure what he hears and reads by the unerring standard of God's Word, but the prudent man also scrutinizes *his own heart*, to see if he can find there the evidences and fruits of regeneration and sanctification. He wishes to make sure that the Holy Spirit has wrought a miracle of grace within him. Deeply impressed with the solemnity of eternity, knowing how prone man is to give himself the benefit of the doubt, he dares not to take anything for granted, he cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa. 26:2).

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Yes, he takes warning from the empty profession all around him, and is fearful lest *he* should prove to be one of the foolish virgins. He refuses to be beguiled by the voice of flatters, who tell him that all is well with his soul. Even though a preacher assures him that he is saved, *that* satisfies him not. He demands something more than a head-knowledge of the letter of Scripture: he wants to know that the law of God has been written on his heart (Heb. 8:10). And in seeking

proof of this he spares no pains, and considers no diligence or effort too great.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Observe well the tense of the verb: it is not that he is concerned about the matter and then takes stock once and for all. No, he *continues* to be exercised before God as to the state of his soul. The “simple” may rest satisfied with the fact that they “believed on Christ” so many years ago, but the “prudent” are tender about their *present* relation to God. They realize that nothing but an obedient following of Christ now, a walking with Him now, a communing with Him now, furnishes any satisfactory proof that they were born-again at a certain date in the past.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Yes, he not only examines diligently his heart, but he is deeply concerned about his “way.” Instead of complacently assuming that the warning belongs unto others, *he* is filled with alarm when he reads that, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Is it possible that, after all, *he* may be deceived? Yes, very, very possible; yea, exceedingly likely. Such a soul, truly awakened by the Holy Spirit, can have no rest till he makes sure that he is in that “*Narrow Way*” which leadeth unto life, and which FEW indeed find. Reader, which are you: a credulous simpleton, or a prudent soul that “looketh *well*” to your going? If the former, may it please the Lord to shatter your false peace, and make you feel your imminent danger. If the latter, may the Holy Spirit grant increasing diligence to “make your calling and election *sure*” (2 Peter 1:10).—A.W.P.

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by Arthur W. Pink

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November, 1933

### Heart Work

“God is not the author of confusion” (1 Cor 14:33); no, the Devil causes that, and he has succeeded in creating much in the thinking of many, by confounding the “heart” with the “nature.” People say, “I was born with an evil heart, and I cannot help it.” It would be more correct to say, “I was born with an evil nature, which I am responsible to subdue.” The Christian needs to clearly recognize that *in addition to* his two “natures”—the flesh and the spirit—he has a heart which God requires him to “keep.” We have already touched upon this point, but deem it advisable to add a further word thereon. I cannot change or better my “nature,” but I may and must my “heart.” For example, “nature” is slothful and loves ease, but the Christian is to redeem the time and be zealous of good works. Nature hates the thought of death, but the Christian should bring his heart to desire to depart and be with Christ.

The popular religion of the day is either a head or a hand one: that is to say, the labouring to acquire a larger and fuller intellectual grasp of the things of God, or a constant round of activities called “service for the Lord.” But the *heart* is neglected! Thousands are reading, studying, taking “Bible-courses,” but for all the *spiritual* benefits their souls derive, they might as well be engaged in breaking stones. Lest it be thought that such a stricture is too severe, we quote a sentence from a letter recently received from one who has completed no less than eight of these “Bible-study courses”: “There was nothing in that 'hard work' which ever called for self-examination, which led me to really know God, and appropriate the Scriptures to my deep need.” No, of course there was not: their compilers—like nearly all the speakers at the big “Bible conferences”—*studiously* avoid all that is unpalatable to the flesh, all that condemns the

natural man, all that pierces and searches the conscience. O the tragedy of this *head* “Christianity.”

Equally pitiable is the *hand* religion of the day, when young “converts” are put to teaching a Sunday school class, urged to “speak” in the open air, or take up “personal work.” How many thousands of beardless youths and young girls are now engaged in what is called “winning souls for Christ,” when *their own* souls are spiritually starved! They may “memorize” two or three verses of Scripture a day, but that does not mean their souls are being fed. How many are giving their evenings to helping in some “mission,” who need to be spending time in “the secret place of the Most High”! And how many bewildered souls are using the major part of the Lord's day in rushing from one meeting to another, instead of seeking from God that which will fortify them against temptations of the week. O the tragedy of this *hand* “Christianity”!

How subtle the Devil is! Under the guise of promoting growth in “the knowledge of the Lord,” he gets people to attend a ceaseless round of meetings, reading an almost endless number of religious periodicals and books, or under the pretense of “honouring the Lord” by all this so-called “service.” He induces the one or the other to *neglect* the great task which GOD has set before us: “Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Prov. 4:23). Ah, it is far easier to speak to others, than it is to constantly use and improve all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain it in sweet and free communion with God. It is far easier to spend an hour reading a sensational article upon “the signs of the time,” than it is to spend an hour in agonizing before God for purifying and rectifying grace!

This work of keeping the heart is *of supreme importance*. The total disregard of it means that we are mere formalists. “My son, give me thine heart” (Prov. 23:26): until *that* be done, God will accept nothing from us. The prayers and praises of our lips, the labour of our hands, yea, and a correct outward walk, are things of no value in *His* sight, while the heart be estranged from Him. As the inspired Apostle declared, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *love*, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *love*, it profiteth me nothing” (1 Cor. 13:1-3). If the heart be not right with God, we cannot *worship* Him, though we may go through the form of it. Watch diligently, then, your love for Him.

God cannot be imposed upon, and he that takes *no* care to order his heart aright before Him is a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as My people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them: for with their mouth they show much love, *but their heart* goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument” (Ezek. 33:31, 32). Here are a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from the words “as My people”: like them, but not of them! And what constituted them impostors? Their outside was very fair—high professions, reverent postures, much seeming delight in the means of grace. Ah, but their *hearts* were not set on God, but were commanded by their lusts, and went after covetousness.

But lest a real Christian should infer from the above that *he* is a hypocrite too, because many times his heart wanders, and he finds—strive all he may—that he cannot keep his mind stayed upon God either

when praying, reading His Word, or engaged in public worship: to him we answer, the objection carries its own refutation. Thou sayest, “strive all I may”; ah, if you *have*, then the blessing of the upright is yours, even though God sees well to exercise you over the affliction of a wandering mind. There remains still much in the understanding and affections to humble thee, but if you are *exercised* over them, *strive against* them, and *sorrow over* your very imperfect success, then that is quite enough to clear thee of the charge of reigning hypocrisy.

The keeping of the heart is supremely important because “out of it are the issues of life”: it is the source and fountain of all vital actions and operations. The heart is the warehouse, the hand and tongue but the shops; what is in *these* comes from *thence*—the heart contrives and the members execute. It is in the heart the principles of the spiritual life are formed: “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil” (Luke 6:45). Then let us diligently see to it that the heart be well stored with pious instruction, seeking to increase in grateful love, reverential fear, hatred of sin, and benevolence in all its exercises, that from within these holy springs may flow and fructify our whole conduct and conversation.

This work of keeping the heart is *the hardest of all*. “To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit, will cost no great pains; but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon Him: this will cost something! To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy; but to get thy heart broken for sin whilst thou art confessing it, be melted with free grace, whilst thou art blessing God for it, be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God's infinite holiness, and to *keep* thy heart in *this* frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and travailing pain of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external acts of thy life in a laudable and comely manner, is no great matter—even carnal persons by the force of common principles can do this; but to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up an holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is *not* easy” (John Flavel).

Ah, dear reader, it is far, far easier to speak in the open air than to uproot pride from thy soul. It calls for much less toil to go out and distribute tracts, than it does to cast out of your mind unholy thoughts. One can speak to the unsaved much more readily than he can deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of obedience. And one can teach a class in the Sunday school with far less trouble than he can teach himself how to strengthen his own spiritual graces. To keep the heart with all diligence calls for frequent examination of its frames and dispositions, the observing of its attitude toward God, and the prevailing directions of its affections; and that is something which no empty professor can be brought to do! To give liberally to religious enterprises he may, but to give himself unto the searching, purifying, and keeping of his heart, he will not.

This work of keeping the heart is *a constant one*. “The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done till life be done: this labour and our life end together. It is with a Christian in his business, as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea; if they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard, and we are weary; there is no time or condition in the life of a Christian, which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in the

keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses' hands, whilst Israel and Amalek were fighting below (Exo. 17:12): no sooner do Moses' hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes" (John Flavel).

As long as we are in this world we must exercise the greatest diligence in protecting the heart. A significant type for the need of this is found in Numbers 19: "This is the law, when a man dieth in a tent: all that come into the tent, and all that is in the tent, shall be unclean seven days. And every open vessel, which hath no covering bound upon it, is unclean" (vv. 14, 15). How many of our readers have sufficient discernment to perceive the *spiritual* meaning of this? Ponder it a moment before you read further. The "tent" into which "death" has entered, is this world (Rom. 5:12). The "vessel" is the human heart (Matt. 25:4; 2 Cor. 4:7). The vessel which hath "no covering bound upon it" is an *unkept* heart, and this is *defiled* by the presence of death! It is a striking illustration of the world's corrupting influence entering as soon as the heart be unguarded. But if the heart be "covered"—protected, vigilently kept—then the world cannot harm it.

Having sought to show that the keeping of the heart is the great work assigned the Christian, in which the very soul and life of true religion consists, and without the performance of which all other duties are unacceptable to God, let us now point out some of the corollaries and consequences which necessarily follow from this fact:

1. The labours which many have taken in religion are lost. Many great services have been performed, many wonderful works wrought by men, which have been utterly rejected of God, and shall receive no recognition in the Day of rewards. Why? Because they took no pains to keep their hearts with God in those duties: this is the fatal rock upon which thousands of vain professors have wrecked to their eternal undoing—they were diligent about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. O how many hours have professors spent in hearing, reading, conferring and praying! and yet as to the supreme task God has assigned, did nothing. Tell me, thou vain professor, when didst thou shed tears for the coldness, deadness, and worldliness of thy heart; when didst thou spend five minutes in a serious effort to keep, purge, improve it? Thinkest thou that such an easy religion can save thee? If so, we must *inverse* the words of Christ and say, "Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto life, and many there be that go in thereat."

2. If the keeping of the heart be the great work of the Christian, then how few *real* Christians are there in the world! If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity and can talk like a Christian, if every one who has natural gifts and abilities and who is helped by the common assisting presence of the Spirit to pray and teach like a Christian, if all who associate themselves with the people of God, contribute of their means to His cause, take delight in public ordinances, and pass as Christians, were real ones, then the number of the saints would be considerable. But alas, to what a little flock do they shrink when measured by *this* rule: how few make conscience of keeping their hearts, watching their thoughts, judging their motives. Ah, there is no human applause to induce men to engage in this difficult work, and were hypocrites *to* do so, they would quickly discover what they do not care to know. This heart-work is left in the hands of a few hidden ones. Reader, are *you* one of them?

3. Unless real Christians spend more time and pains about their hearts than they have done, they are never likely to grow in grace, be of much use to God, or be possessors of much comfort in this world. You say, “But my heart seems so listless and dead”—do you wonder at it, when you keep it not in daily communion with Him who is the Fountain of Life? If your body had received no more concern and attention than your soul, what state would it now be in? O my Brother, or Sister, has not your zeal run in the wrong channels? God may be enjoyed even in the midst of earthly employments: “Enoch walked with God and begat sons and daughters” (Gen. 5:22)—he did not retire into a monastery; nor is there any need for you to.

4. It is high time the Christian reader set to this heart-work in real earnest. Do not you have to lament, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song. 1:6)? Then away with fruitless controversies and idle questions; away with empty names and vain shows; away with harsh censuring of others—turn upon thyself. You have been a stranger long enough to this work; you have trifled about the borders of religion too long; the world has deterred you from this vitally necessary work too long. Will you not now resolve to look better after thy heart? Haste thee to thy closet.

5. He that *will* keep his heart must take heed against plunging himself into a multiplicity of earthly business (either in his worldly calling or so-called religious “service”) so that he is unable to make his spiritual and eternal interests his chief concern. You say, “But I must live,” yes, and you must die! Put the claims of God and your heart first, and He will not suffer thy body to starve! Then take heed lest you neglect your soul by gratifying the immoderate clamouring of the flesh. Christ rebuked Martha because she was troubled about “many things,” and assured her that but *one* thing was “needful.” O say with David, “One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I *seek after*; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in His temple” (Psa. 27:4).—A.W.P.

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### **A Faithful Word**

The present article is a letter which was written by a minister of the Gospel to a gentleman of high repute in religion at New York:

Dear Sir. As you in your letter manifest a great deal of candour and openness of mind, I, in making a reply, will use great plainness of speech, and will, at the same time, hope that the Lord may seal instruction on your heart. It may be you are all that you say you are, and a great deal more. You may also perform all that you say you do, and yet fall vastly short of being a Christian in heart. You may, as it seems you are, be a member of a church; be in high esteem among professors of religion, concerning which you speak with emphasis; be thought well of by your minister, which you appear to glory in; be much applauded for your zeal and diligence, which seems a sweet morsel to you; possess a good talent for exhortation, respecting which you throw out some broad hints; but alas! know you not, my good Sir, that all of the above things may be true, and yet you remain a total stranger to the *power of God* and to a *radical change of heart*. Believe me when I say that you may attend public service constantly, pray frequently, and read continually, and yet, as to spiritual things, be as blind as a bat and as dead as a stone. Real religion, Sir, and vital godliness, are something more than all this; and I am sorry to find your letter savours so much of the former and nothing of the latter.

You seem to make a great bustle and noise, but what does it all amount to, when properly dissected and squared by the Word of God? Why, to me it appears like a puff of empty air. I do not write these lines, Sir,

to discourage you, but to correct you wherein I conceive you miss the mark in matters of the highest importance. I hope I shall not be thought to trespass when I say, if you have not had the fountain of sin in your heart broken up; if you have not discovered and felt the wrath of God in His holy Law going out against you as a sinner; if you have not found yourself under the arrests of Divine justice, and thereby exposed to eternal ruin; if you have not had that sound sense of your lost condition which has made you flee from the wrath to come; if you have not had the knowledge of salvation, by the forgiveness of your sins, communicated by the Holy Spirit; if Christ has not been formed in your heart the hope of glory; if you have not laid hold on eternal life; if you have not hungered and thirsted after Divine instruction, under a feeling sense of gross darkness upon you, and be desirous of knowing more of Christ Jesus by the Spirit's testimony of Him, whom to know is life eternal; if you have not been made, in some degree, sick of sin, sick of self, sick of this world, and willing to part with and leave all for Christ; if these things, I say, have not in some measure taken place and been experimentally known by you, your hope is fallacious, your peace is a false peace, your faith is fantastical, your joy is delusive, your knowledge is speculative, your love of God is feigned, your fear is servile, your change of heart is mere notion, your religion is vain, and you are yet in your sins, notwithstanding all the great outcry you are now making about religion.

Real Christianity, Sir, consists in something more than mere notion or whim. It is not what a man may think he is, but what God has actually made him to be, by an act of mere mercy and grace, that constitutes him a true disciple of Christ. Not a few in this our day are, it is to be feared, setting themselves down satisfied, as I fear you are, under an impression that all is right between God and their souls, merely because they are well enough thought of to be taken into church fellowship, and some other outside things, such, I mean, as you lay so much stress upon in your letter. O sad mistake! A most awful delusion is this, which a day that is quickly coming will disclose and make known, and then how grievously will they be surprised and astonished who have made lies their refuge, falsehood their covering, and an arm of flesh their support. I wish that you, dear Sir, may not prove to be one of this sort. I shall, however, have just cause to fear it until you can give a better account of yourself than you have hitherto done.

Your state, Sir, in the sight of God, is not bettered by you joining a church, though you fondly imagine it is. Permit me to say, that if your heart is not right in the sight of God, which it cannot be unless God Himself sets it right, it matters not what outward show you may make, or what people may think or say of you; *it is Christ in the heart*, "the hope of glory," that constitutes a real Christian; whereas, the name of Christ in a mere notion of Him will avail nothing at all in the day of trial or on a death-bed. Many have known enough of Christ, of themselves, of the Law of God and the Gospel of His Son, of the plan of salvation and of the stability of the covenant of grace, *in the theory*, to get themselves a great name among men, and a high station in a church for many years; and yet, when they have been summoned to appear in another world, have found themselves totally destitute of that which alone can make a dying bed easy. There was but one leper out of ten that returned to give glory to God, and he was a stranger, a poor Samaritan (Luke 17:18). And so it often happens among the great crowd who make a profession of religion and become members of churches; it is only now and then a poor stranger that comes in for the blessings of the Gospel, and he is generally looked upon by graceless professors as a Samaritan, and as one in nowise friendly to them. When the Lord singles out one for Himself from the company of graceless professors, and opens his ears to discipline, opens his heart to receive the Truth, opens his eyes to see wondrous things out of His Law, and opens his mouth to show forth His praise, such a one will speak of

what he has known, felt, handled, and tasted of the Word of Life; and as he can very generally tell a hypocrite from a real saint, he will take the liberty of pointing him out; and as he also knows truth from error, he will receive the former, and reject the latter, though the latter proceed from a clergyman. But as such proceedings will be sure to prove very offensive to those who have only a name to live, *his* name will soon be cast out as evil, and he will be viewed as a pestilent fellow, and as one who is trying to turn their churches upside down, whereas he is only endeavouring to undeceive those who are deceiving themselves and others.

I do not write thus, Sir, with a view of discouraging you from attending to that which is good, but to caution you against wolves in sheeps' clothing, and against trusting in a name to live, while, it may be you are dead. Man is naturally prone to fly to a false refuge, and to content himself with a false peace; this is like Zoar, "near to flee to"; and it is one of the hardest things in the world to persuade a man that *his* hope is delusive. And yet I am convinced if God should stir up his wrath against a man who is in a delusion, however confident he may be of the safety of his state, it would cause his beauty to fade like a leaf. And if this, Sir, should take place in your experience, it is more than twenty to one with me that you would cut a very different figure from what you now expect. O Sir, try to think how astonished you would stand in case your present certainty of salvation were overturned and brought to nought, and your confidence rejected! It is surprising to think, and impossible to tell, how the burning wrath of God revealed in a broken law, and sent home with full force to the conscience, does scorch, wither, consume, and burn up a man's false faith, false hope, false joy, and false peace. It is evident from the oracles of God that none will be able to stand with peace and composure in the Day of the Lord's wrath, but those who have their anchorage in Christ Jesus, having fled for refuge to lay hold of that blessed hope set before us in the Gospel. All false props, Sir, will in that Day totter, sink and fall under the man who leans upon them, and the guilty soul thus left will be exposed to all the curses contained in the Book of the Law. A mere form of religion, an outward show in the flesh, will then put off its flattering charms, and appear in its true garb. O if men were duly sensible of this, they would not dream of taking rest in such outside things as they now do.

Believe me, dear sir, it is not an outward profession of religion, but an inward possession of the grace of God, that constitutes a Christian: not knowledge in the head, but the root of the matter in the soul, that ensures eternal life to us; not what a man says, but what he feels, that proves that he has got Divine life in his inward part; not what he does for God, but what God has done for him, that makes him meet for Heaven. It is not fancy, but faith, which purifies the heart; not a vain confidence, but a good hope through grace, which keeps and bears up the soul in the day of evil; not the esteem of men, but the approbation of God, which brings peace to the troubled conscience; not being united to a church here below, but being one with Christ, the true and living Vine, that makes our standing eternally secure: not the natural passions stirred up, but the oil of joy poured into the soul, that makes a man forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more; not partaking of bread and wine at the Lord's table, but feeding on Christ by faith, that makes him thrive and grow. It is not a blind zeal, but a zeal according to knowledge derived from the Spirit's teaching and testimony of Christ in a man's understanding and conscience, that makes him approved of God. It is not what we may be thought of by those around us, but what God's thoughts toward us are, that will be the turning point, and decide our case when death comes. These things, it may be, will greatly astonish you, but as sure as there is a God, they are the things on which eternal salvation hangs.

Look to it, therefore, and do not trifle with, or think lightly of, things of such vast moment; for if you do, it may prove to your cost in a Day yet to come. If our names are not found written among the living in the spiritual Jerusalem, we shall be cast out as withered branches, let us attain to what place of honour and greatness we may in the church below. As to your being in good standing among professors, that is but a small matter when compared with some other things; and how a man of your sense and reading can be so exalted and enthusiastically carried away with such little things, I cannot account for in any other way than by this rule: “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Should God be pleased, in the multitude of His tender mercies, to open your eyes and bring you to see things as they really are, you will look back on your present state with amazement and horror, seeing it to be as perilous as I now conceive it to be.

Dear Sir, do turn these things over in your mind, and search closely into your standing before the Lord, and be not deceived, for God is not mocked. I would advise you to read the Bible very attentively, and earnestly to beg of God to set you right if you are wrong, as it is greatly to be feared you are. Pay less regard to the good opinion that men may have of you, as they will not be your judges in the great Day of account. Remember, God will be the righteous Judge at that Day, and that by *His* decision you will stand or fall. Consider also how many have been deceived in the end about the business of salvation and the goodness of their state, though they seem to before possess an unshaken confidence of their being right. Examine well the ground of your present hope, the foundation of your faith, and what authority you have to draw a determined conclusion that your heart is right in the sight of God. Bear with me while I once more say that I stand in doubt of you, and that I can see no just reason on the face of your letter for you to conclude, as you now do, that your condition in the sight of God is good. This, however, I know, God is able to do great things for you, and I know not but He will, and perhaps He is at work with you now. If this should be the case, the work will go on and be brought to perfection, and you will have cause to admire His grace, and to be thankful for His unspeakable mercy. Seek for these things, my dear Sir, with all diligence, and God grant you a successful issue. With regard to myself, I must needs say, that the esteem and good will of men, even of spiritual men, have but little weight with me; yea, no weight at all in reference to my standing before God. I am constrained to look to a much higher source for a foundation on which to venture my immortal part. Nothing short of a believing view of Christ as crucified for me, and the witness of the Holy Spirit with my spirit that I am a child of God, will carry me ascendant over fears and doubts whether all is right or not. And inasmuch as nothing short of these things will satisfy my own soul, I must still doubt the safety of those who are contenting themselves with such things of so trifling a nature as you appear to do. It may be that my great plainness will give offence, but I must risk that. Write again, Sir, whenever you think proper. Adieu. J. Osbourne, 1843.

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### Vile!

We are rather afraid that its title will deter some from reading this article: we hope it will not be so. True, it does not treat of a popular theme, nay, one which is now very rarely heard in the pulpit; nevertheless, it is a scriptural one. Fallen man *is* “vile,” *so* vile that it has been rightly said “he is half brute, half devil.” Nor does such a description exceed the truth. Man is “born like a wild ass's colt” (Job 11:12), and he is “taken captive by him [the devil] at his will” (2 Tim. 2:26). Perhaps the reader is ready to reply, Ah, that is man in his unregenerate state, but it is far otherwise with the regenerate. From one viewpoint that is true; from another, it is not so.

Did not the Psalmist acknowledge, “So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was *as a beast* before Thee” (73:22)—unteachable, untractable, kicking against God's providential dealings; not behaving like a man, much less like a saint! Again, did not Agur confess, “Surely I am *more brutish* than any man” (Prov. 30:2). True, we never hear such lamentations as these from those who claim to have received their “Pentecost” or “second blessing,” nor from those who boast they are living “the victorious life.” But to those who are painfully conscious of the “plague” of their own heart, such words may often describe their case. Only recently we received a letter from a dear brother in Christ, saying, “the vanity and corruption that I find within, which refuses to be kept in subjection, is so strong at times that it makes me cry out 'my wounds do stink and are corrupt'.”

Does the reader object against *our* appropriation of the Psalms and Proverbs, and say, We in this New

Testament dispensation occupy much higher ground than those did. Probably you have often been told so by men, but are you sure of it from the Word of God? Listen, then, to the groan of an eminent Christian: “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). Do you never feel *thus*, my reader? Then we are sincerely sorry for you. As to the other part of the description of fallen man, “half devil”: did not Christ say to regenerate Peter, “Get thee behind Me, Satan: thou art an offence unto Me” (Matt. 16:23)? And are there not times when writer and reader fully merit the same reproof? Speaking for myself, I bow my head with shame, and say, Alas there is.

“Behold, I am vile” (Job 40:4). This was not said by Cain in a remorseful moment after his murder of Abel, nor by Judas after he had betrayed the Saviour into the hands of His enemies; instead, it was the utterance of one of whom God said, “There is none like him in the earth, a perfect (sincere) and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil” (Job 1:8). Was Job's language the effect of extreme melancholy, induced by his terrible afflictions? If not, was he justified in using such strong language of self-deprecation? If he was, are Christians today warranted in echoing the same?

In order to arrive at the correct answer to the above questions, let us ask another: *when was it* that Job said, “Behold, I am vile”? Was it when he first received tidings of his heavy losses? No, for then he exclaimed, “the LORD gave, and the LORD hath taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD” (1:21). Was it when his friends reasoned with and reproved him? No, for then he vindicated himself and boasted of his goodness. Then *when* was it that Job declared “Behold, I am vile”? It was when the Lord appeared to him and gave him a startling revelation of His own wondrous perfections! It was when he stood in the all-penetrating light of God's immaculate holiness and was made to realize something of His mighty power.

Ah, when a soul is truly brought into the presence of the living God, boasting ceases, our comeliness is turned into corruption (Dan. 10:8), and we cry, “Woe is me! for I am undone” (Isa. 6:5). When God makes to the soul a personal revelation of His wondrous perfections, that individual is effectually convinced of his own wretchedness. The more we are given to discern the ineffable glory of the Lord, the more will our self-complacency wither. It is in God's light, and in that only “we see light” (Psa. 36:9). When He shines into our understandings and hearts, and brings to light “the hidden things of darkness” (1 Cor. 4:5), we perceive the utter corruption of our nature, and are abominable in our own eyes. While we measure ourselves by our fellows, we shall, most likely, think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think (Rom. 12:3); but when we measure ourselves by the holy requirements of God's nature, we cry I “am dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). True repentance changes a man's opinion of himself.

Is, then, a Christian today warranted in saying “Behold, I am vile”? Not as faith views himself united to the One who is “altogether lovely”; but as faith discerns, in the light of the Word, what he is by nature, what he is in and of himself, he may. Not that he is to hypocritically adopt such language in order to gain the reputation of great humility; nay, such an utterance is *only* to be found upon our lips as it is *the feeling expression* of our hearts: particularly is it to be owned before God, when we come to Him in contrition and in confession. Yet is it also to be acknowledged before the saints, even as the Apostle Paul cried publicly, “O wretched man that I am!” (Rom. 7:24). It is part of our testimony to own (before those who fear the Lord) what God has revealed to us.

“Behold, I am vile”: such is the candid and sorrowful confession of the writer. I am vile *in my imaginations*. O what scum rises to the surface when lusts boil within me. What filthy pictures are visioned in “the chambers of my imagery” (Ezek. 8:12). What unlawful desires run riot within. Yes, even when engaged in meditating upon the holy things of God, the mind wanders and the fancy becomes engaged with what is foul and fetid. How often does the writer have to acknowledge before God that “from the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness” in him, “but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores” (Isa. 1:6). Nightly does he avail himself of that Fountain which has been opened “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zech. 13:1).

2. I am vile *in my self-will*. How fretful am I when God blows upon my plans and thwarts my desires. What surgings of rebellion within my wicked breast when God's providences displease. Instead of lying placidly as clay in the Potter's hand, how often do I act like the restive colt, which rears and kicks, refusing to be held in with bit and bridle, determined to have my own way. Alas, alas, how very little have I learned of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart.” Instead of “the flesh” in me being purified, it has putrefied; instead of its resistance to the spirit weakening, it appears to be stronger each year. O that I had the wings of a dove, that I could fly away *from myself*.

3. I am vile *in my religious pretences*. How often I am anxious to make “a fair show in the flesh” and be thought highly of by others. What hypocrisies have I been guilty of in seeking to gain a reputation for spirituality. How frequently have I conveyed false impressions to others, making them suppose it was far otherwise within me, than was actually the case. What pride and self-righteousness have swayed me. And of what insincerity have I, at times, been guilty of in the pulpit: praying to the ears of the congregation instead of to God, pretending to have liberty when my own spirit was bound, speaking of those things which I had not first felt and handled for myself. Much, very much cause has the writer to take the leper's place, cover his lips, and cry “Unclean, unclean”!

4. I am vile *in my unbelief*. How often am I still filled with doubts and misgivings. How often do I lean unto my own understanding instead of upon the Lord. How often do I fail to expect from God (Mark 11:24) the things for which I ask Him. When the hour of testing comes, only too frequently are past deliverances forgotten. When troubles assail, instead of looking off unto the things unseen, I am occupied with the difficulties before me. Instead of remembering that with God all things are possible, I am ready to say, “Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?” (Psa. 78:19). True it is not always thus, for the Holy Spirit graciously keeps alive the faith which He has placed within; but when *He* ceases to work, and a trial is faced, how often did I give my Master occasion to say, “How is it that ye have no faith?” (Mark 4:40).

Reader, how closely does your experience correspond with the above? Is it true that, “As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man” (Prov. 27:19)? Have we been describing some of the symptoms of your diseased heart? Have you ever owned before God, “Behold I am vile”? Do you bear witness to the humbling fact before your brethren and sisters in Christ? It is comparatively easy to *utter* such words, but do you *feel* them? Does the realization of this truth make you “blush” (Ezra 9:6) and groan in secret? Have you such a personal and painful sense of your vileness that, often, you feel thoroughly unfit to draw nigh unto a holy God? If so:

1. You have abundant cause *to be thankful to God* that His Holy Spirit has shown you something of your wretched self, that He has not kept you in ignorance of your woeful state, that He has not left you in that gross spiritual darkness that enshrouds millions of professing Christians. Ah my stricken Brother, if you are groaning over the ocean of corruption within, and feel utterly unworthy to take the sacred name of Christ upon your polluted lips, then you should be unfeignedly thankful that you belong not to that great multitude of self-complacent and self-righteous religionists of whom it is written, “They were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore shall they fall among them that fall: in the time of their visitation they shall be cast down” (Jer. 8:12). Much cause have you to praise the God of all grace that He anointed *your* sin-blinded eyes, and that now, in His sight, you are able to see a little of your hideous deformities, and cry “I am black” (Song. 1:5).

2. You have abundant cause *to walk softly before God*. Must not the realization of our vileness truly humble us before Him, make us smite upon our breast, and cry “God be merciful to me, the sinner”! Yes, such a prayer is as suited to the maturest saint as it was when first convicted of his lost estate, for he is *to continue as he began*: Colossians 2:6, Revelation 2:5. But alas, how quickly does the apprehension of our vileness leave us! How frequently does pride again dominate us. For this reason we are bidden to “Look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to *the hole of the pit* whence ye are digged” (Isa. 51:1). Beg God to daily show you your vileness that you may walk humbly before Him.

3. You have abundant cause *to marvel at the surpassing love of the Triune God* toward you. That the Eternal Three should have set Their heart upon such a wretch is indeed the wonder of all wonders. That God the Father should foreknow and foresee every sin of which you would be guilty in thought and word and deed, and yet have loved thee “with an everlasting love” must indeed fill you with astonishment. That God the Son should have laid aside the robes of His glory and be made in the likeness of sin's flesh, in order to redeem one so foul and filthy as I, was truly a love “that passeth knowledge.” That God the Holy Spirit should take up His residence and dwell in the heart of one so vile, only proves that where sin abounded grace did much more abound. “Unto Him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and His Father; to Him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 1:5, 6).—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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November, 1933

### Practical Godliness

“But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves” (James 1:22). It is much, very much to be thankful for, when the Holy Spirit has illumined a man's understanding, dispersed the mists of error, and established him in the Truth. Yet *that* is only the beginning. The Holy Scriptures are “profitable” not only for “doctrine,” but also “for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” (2 Tim. 3:16). Observe well the order there: before we are ready to be instructed “in righteousness” (right doing), there is much in our lives that God “reproves,” and which *we* must “correct.” Necessarily so, for before conversion *everything* in our lives *was wrong!* for all we did was for the gratifying of self, with no thought or concern for God's honour and glory. Therefore, the first great need, and the primary duty of every young convert is *not* to study the Old Testament types, or puzzle his brains over prophecy, but to diligently search the Scriptures in order to find out what is pleasing and displeasing to God, what He forbids and what He commands.

If you have been genuinely converted, then your first concern must be to form all the details of your life—in the home, in the church, in the world—*so as to please God*. And in the actual bringing of this to pass, the order will be “cease to do evil; learn to do well” (Isa. 1:16, 17); “Depart from evil, and do good” (Psa. 34:14 and cf. 37:27). There has to be a breaking down, before there can be a building up (Eccl. 3:3). There has to be an emptying of self, before there is the filling of the Spirit. There has to be an unlearning, before there is a true learning. And there has to be an hating the “evil,” before there is loving of the “good” (Amos 5:15 and cf. Rom. 12:9).

Now the extent the young Christian *does* use the Holy Scriptures in a practical way, regulating his thoughts, desires, and actions by their warnings and encouragements, their prohibitions and precepts, will very largely determine the measure in which he will enjoy God's *blessing* on his life. As the moral Governor of this world, God takes note of our conduct, and sooner or later manifests His displeasure against our sins, and His approval of a righteous walk, by granting that measure of prosperity which is most for our good and His glory. In the keeping of His commandments “there is great reward” (Psa. 19:11), in *this* life (1 Tim. 4:8). O how much spiritual and temporal blessing most Christians miss through careless and disobedient conduct: see Isaiah 48:18!

The tragic thing is that, instead of the average young Christian diligently studying God's word so as to discover all the details of the Divine will for him, he does almost anything and everything else. Many a one engages in “personal work” or some form of Christian “service,” while *his own* life remains full of things *displeasing to God!* The presence of those displeasing things in his life hinders God's blessing upon his soul, body, and temporal affairs; and to him it has to be said, “your sins have withholden good things from you” (Jer. 5:25). God's word to His people is “work out *your own* salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). But O how little of this “fear and trembling” is to be found any where today! Instead, there is self-esteem, self-confidence, boasting, and carnal security.

There are others who give themselves unto the diligent study of Doctrine, but, generally, they fail to realize that the doctrine of Scripture is not a series of intellectual propositions, but is “the doctrine which is *according to godliness*” (1 Tim. 6:3). The “doctrine” or “teaching” of God's holy Word is given not for the instruction of our brains, but for the regulation of all the details of our daily lives; and this in order that we “may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things” (Titus 2:10). But *that* can only be realized by a constant reading of the Word with one dominant purpose—to discover *what* God forbids and *what* He commands; by our meditating frequently on what we have read; and by fervent prayer for supernatural grace to enable us to obey.

If the young convert does not early form the habit of treading the path of practical obedience to God, then he will not have His ear when he prays! 1 John 3:22 states plainly one of the main conditions which we must constantly seek grace to heed, if our petitions are to meet with acceptance: “And whatsoever we ask, we receive of Him, because we keep His commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in His sight.” But if Instead of submitting unto God's holy requirements, we follow our own inclinations, then it will be said, “But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you, that He will not hear” (Isa. 59:2). This is unspeakably solemn. O what a difference it makes whether or not we have experimental access to God!

Not only does the young Christian, by following a course of self-pleasing, reduce his prayers to empty words, but he brings down upon himself the rod of God, and every thing goes wrong in his life. That is one reason why, in these hard times, many Christians are suffering just as sorely as the poor worldlings are: *God is displeased with their ways*, and does not show Himself strong on their behalf (2 Chron. 16:9). In this connection reread “Sound the Alarm” and “Not Ashamed” in the March and April issues. There we have sought to point out the remedy, which calls for *real* heart-humbling before the Lord, godly sorrow,

true repentance, unsparing confession, the firm determination to reform our ways; and *then* (and not before) faith's counting on God's mercy and a patient expectation that He will work wonders for us if we now tread the path of full submission to Him.—A.W.P.

(The above is the substance of a letter [revised] recently sent to a young brother, who [alas] has had no teaching along the lines of practical godliness, and who is now in sore straits.)

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### Repentance

To His servants Christ gave commandment “that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His Name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem” (Luke 24:47). “Beginning at Jerusalem” not because of any dispensational reason, but because grace would commence with the most unlikely and unworthy ones. But O how little repentance is being preached today, even by those claiming to be the true servants of God. “Believe, Believe, only believe” is being sounded forth widely, but where is the voice now being lifted up in the wilderness crying “repent ye”? Are not the claims of God to be pressed upon men, and their utter and awful failure to meet those claims, *before* we tell them of His grace? And what are the claims of God upon every human creature? Are they not summed up in, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart.” Is He not entitled to this? Can He ever demand less? Is He not infinitely worthy of being loved? And is not that love to be expressed by obedience, by complete subjection to Him, by seeking to please Him in all things? And is not the failure of fallen man to meet this righteous demand of God that which constitutes the very “sinfulness of sin”? Is it not that, so far from having been in subjection to God's will and having sought His pleasure, man has turned aside to his own way and sought only to please himself? And is it not the first duty of God's servants to expound and explain this solemn fact, pressing it on the consciences of their hearers?

Does not the Old Testament precede the New? Does not the ministry of John the Baptist precede that of Christ? Does not Romans 1:18 to 3:20 precede Romans 3:21-26? Does not repentance toward God precede faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ? Certainly it does; but where does it do so in the preaching of present-

day evangelists? None can truly believe in Christ till their hearts are broken before God through a deep realization of the awfulness of their condition in His sight. The ground must be plowed before it can receive the seed. To preach the finished work of Christ to those who have little or no realization of their awful condition before Him—that is, the consciousness that the whole of their life has consisted of self-pleasing, to the utterly ignoring of God—is only to cast pearls before swine. And what will be the effect? What *is* the effect the world over? This: those who have never been convicted by the Holy Spirit will cordially assent to the letter of the Gospel, receive the Word with joy, accept Christ as their personal Saviour, and go to swell the crowd of those having a form of godliness, but who are total strangers to a supernatural, conscience-plowing, contrite heart-giving, and transforming power. Proverbs 28:13, Isaiah 55:7, Acts 3:19 are just as much a part of God's Word as is John 3:16, yet none would ever discover it from what he now hears, even in the Gospel halls. O my brethren in the ministry, preach *repentance* if you would honor God, discharge your responsibility, and be faithful unto the souls of your hearers. Suppose it makes you to be unpopular: what of that if you receive *Christ's* well done in that Day!—A.W.P.

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There is no way left but this; fair means, as we say, will not do; good words, a glorious gospel, entreatings, beseeching with blood and tears, will not do. Men are resolved to put God to the utmost of it; if He will have them, He must fetch them, follow them, catch them, lame them; yea, break their bones, or else He will not save them. Some men think an invitation, an outward call, a rational discourse will do; but they are much deceived. There must be a Power, an exceeding great and mighty Power attending the Word, or it works not effectually to the salvation of the soul. I know that these things leave men without excuse; but they are not enough to bring men home to God. Sin has hold of them; they have sold themselves to it; the power of the devil has hold of them, they are his captives at his will; yea, and more than all this, their will is one with sin, and with the devil, to be held captive thereby; and if God gives not contrition, repentance, or a broken heart for sin, there will not be, no, not so much as a mind in man, to forsake this so horrible a confederacy and plot against his soul.—Bunyan.

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### Heart Work

The heart of man is his worst part before it be regenerate, and his best part afterwards: it is the seat of principles and the source of actions. The eye of God is, and the eye of the Christian ought to be, principally fixed upon it. The great difficulty in conversion is to win the heart to God, and the great difficulty after conversion is to keep the heart with God. Herein lies the very pinch and stress of religion; here is that which makes the way to life a narrow way, and the gate of Heaven a straight one. To afford some direction and help in this great work, these articles have been prepared. We realize their many defects, yet trust that God will be pleased to use them. No other subject can begin to compare with it in practical importance.

The general neglect of the heart is the root cause of the present sad state of Christendom: the remainder of this article might readily be devoted unto the verifying and amplifying of that statement; instead, we merely point out briefly one or two of the more prominent features. Why is it that so many preachers have withheld from their congregations that which was, so obviously, most needed? Why have they “spoken smooth things” instead of wielding the sword of the Spirit? Because their own hearts were not right with God: *His* holy fear was not upon them. An “honest and good heart” (Luke 8:15) will cause a servant of Christ to preach what he sees to be the most essential and profitable truths of the Word, however displeasing they may be unto many of his people. He will faithfully rebuke, exhort, admonish, correct and instruct, whether his hearers like it or not.

Why have so many church members departed from the faith and given heed to seducing spirits? Why have multitudes been led away by the error of the wicked, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness? Why have so many others been attracted to companies of notional professors, which, despite their proud boasts of being the only people gathered together in (or unto) the name of Christ, are, for the most part, people who have only an acquaintance with the letter of Scripture and are strangers to practical godliness? Ah, the answer is not far to seek: it was because they had no *heart* acquaintance with the things of God. It is they who are sickly and diseased which fall easy victims unto the quacks; so it is those whose hearts are never rooted and grounded in the Truth, which are tossed about with every wind of doctrine. The study and guarding of the heart is the best antidote against the infectious errors of the times. And this leads us to point out some of the *advantages* of keeping the heart.

1. The pondering and garrisoning of the heart is a great help to the understanding in the deep things of God. An honest and experienced heart is a wonderful aid to a weak head. Such a heart will serve as a commentary upon a great portion of the Scriptures. When such a one reads the Psalms of David or the Epistles of Paul, he will find there many of his own difficulties stated and solved: he will find them speaking the language of his own heart—recounting *his* experiences, expressing *his* sorrows and joys. By a close and regular study of the heart he will be far better fitted to understand the things of God, than graceless rabbis and inexperienced doctors—not only will they be clearer, but far sweeter unto him. A man may discourse orthodoxly and profoundly of the nature and effects of faith, of the preciousness of Christ, and the sweetness of communion with God, who has never felt the impressions or efficacy of them upon his own spirit. But O how dull and dry will these *notions* be unto those who have *experienced* them! Ah, my reader, experience is the great schoolmaster. Much in Job and Lamentations will seem dull and uninteresting until you have had deeper exercises of soul. The 7th Chapter of Romans is not likely to appeal much unto you until you make more conscience of indwelling sin. Many of the later Psalms will appear too extravagant in their language until you enjoy closer and sweeter fellowship with God. But the more you endeavour to keep your heart, and bring it into subjection unto God, to keep from it the evil solicitations of Satan, the more *suited to your own case* will you find many chapters of the Bible. It is not simply that you have to be in the “right mood” to appreciate, but that you have to pass through certain exercises of heart ere you can discover their appropriateness. Then it is that you will have “felt” and “tasted” for yourself the things of which the inspired writers treat. Then it is you will have the key which unlocks many a verse that is fast closed unto masters of Hebrew and Greek.

2. Care in keeping the heart supplies one of the best evidences of sincerity. There is no external act which distinguishes the sound from the unsound professor, but before this trial no hypocrite can stand. It is true that when they think death to be very near, many will cry out of the wickedness and fear of their hearts, but that signifies nothing more than does the howling of an animal when it is in distress. But if thou art tender of thy conscience, watchful of thy thoughts, and careful each day of the workings and frames of thy heart, this strongly argues the sincerity of it; for what but a real hatred of sin, what but a sense of the Divine eye being upon thee, could put any one upon these secret duties which lie out of the observation of all creatures? If, then, it be such a desirable thing to have a fair testimony of your integrity, and to know of a truth that you fear God, then study, watch, keep the heart.

The true comfort of our souls much depends upon this, for he that is negligent in the keeping of his heart,

is generally a stranger to spiritual assurance and the sweet comforts flowing from it. God does not usually indulge lazy souls with inward peace, for He will not be the patron of carelessness. He has united together our diligence and comfort, and they are greatly mistaken who suppose that the beautiful child of assurance can be born without soul pangs. Diligent self-examination is called for: first the looking into the Word, and then the looking into our hearts, to see how far they correspond. It is true the Holy Spirit indwells the Christian, but He cannot be discerned by His essence; it is His operations that manifest Him, and these are known by the graces He produces in the soul; and those can only be perceived by diligent search and honest scrutiny of the heart. It is in the heart the Spirit works.

3. Care in keeping the heart makes blessed and fruitful the means of grace and the discharge of our spiritual duties. O what precious communion we have with God when He is approached in a right frame of soul: then we may say with David, “My meditation of Him shall be sweet” (Psa. 104:34). But when the heart be indisposed, full of the things of this world, or weighted down by the cares of this life, then we miss the comfort and joy which should be ours. The sermons you hear and the articles you read (if by *God’s* servants), will appear very different if you bring a *prepared* heart to them! If the heart be right you will not grow drowsy while hearing the reading of the riches of God’s grace, the glories of Christ, the beauty of holiness, or the needs-be for a scripturally ordered walk. It was because the heart was neglected you got so little from attending to the means of grace! The same holds good of prayer. O what a difference there is between a deeply exercised and spiritually burdened heart pouring out itself before God in fervent supplication, and the utterance of verbal petitions by rote! It is the difference between reality and formality. He who is diligent in heart-work and perceives the state of his own soul, is at no loss in knowing *what* to ask God for. So he who makes it a practice of walking with God, communing with God, meditating upon God, spontaneously worships Him in spirit and in truth: like David he will say, “My heart is inditing a good matter” (Psa. 45:1). The Hebrew there is very suggestive: literally, it is “my heart is boiling up a good matter”; it is a figurative expression, taken from a living spring, which is bubbling up fresh water. The formalist has to rack his mind, and as it were, laboriously pump up something to say unto God; but he who makes conscience of heart work finds his soul like a bottle full of new wine—ready to burst, giving vent to sorrow or joy as his case may be.

4. Diligence in keeping the heart will make the soul stable in the hour of temptation. The care or neglect of the conscience largely determines our attitude toward and response unto solicitations of evil. The careless heart falls an easy prey to Satan. His main attacks are made upon the heart, for if he gains *that*, he gains all, for it commands the whole man! Alas, how easy a conquest is an *unguarded* heart: it is no more difficult for the devil to capture it, than for a burglar to enter a house whose windows and doors are unfastened. It is the watchful heart that both discovers and suppresses the temptation before it comes in its full strength. It is much like a large stone rolling down a hill! it is easy to stop at first, but very difficult after it has gained full momentum. So, if we cherish the first vain imagination as it enters the mind, it will soon grow into a powerful lust which will not take a nay.

Acts are preceded by desires, and desires by thoughts. A sinful object first presents itself to the imagination, and unless *that* be nipped in the bud, the affections will be stirred and enlisted. If the heart does not repel the evil imagination, if instead it dwells on it, encourages it, feeds on it, then it will not be long before the consent of the will is obtained. A very large and important part of heart work lies in

observing its first motions, and checking sin *there*. The motions of sin are weakest at the first, and a little watchfulness and care then, prevents much trouble and mischief later. But if the first movings of sin in the imagination be not observed and resisted, then the careless heart is quickly brought under the full power of temptation, and Satan is victorious.

5. The diligent keeping of the heart is a great aid to the improving of our graces. Grace never thrives in a careless soul, for the roots and habits of grace are planted in the heart, and the deeper they are rooted there, the more thriving and flourishing grace is. In Ephesians 3:17 we read of being “rooted and grounded in love”: love in the heart is the spring of every gracious word of the mouth and of every holy act of the hand. But is not *Christ* the “root” of the Christian’s graces? Yes, the originating root, but grace is the derivative root, planted and nourished by Him, and according as *this* thrives under Divine influences, so the fruits of grace are more healthy and vigorous. But in a heart which is not kept diligently, those fructifying influences are choked. Just as in an uncared-for garden, the weeds crowd out the flowers, so vain thoughts that are not disallowed and lusts which are not mortified, devour the strength of the heart. “My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise Thee with joyful lips: *When I remember Thee upon my bed, and meditate on Thee in the night watches*” (Psa. 63:5, 6).

6. The diligent care of the heart makes Christian fellowship profitable and precious. Why is it that when Christians meet together, there are often sad jarrings and contentions? It is because of unmortified passions. Why is their conversation so frothy and worthless? It is because of the vanity and earthiness of their hearts. It is not difficult to discern by the actions and converse of Christians, what frames their spirits are under. Take one whose mind is truly stayed upon God, and how serious, heavenly, and edifying is his conversation: “The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment. The law of his God *is in his heart*” (Psa. 37:30, 31)! If each of us was humbled every day before God under the evils of his own heart, we should be more pitiful and tender toward others: Galatians 6:1.

7. A heart well kept fits us for any condition God may cast us into, or any service He has to use us in. He that has learnt to keep his heart lowly, is fit for prosperity; and he who knows how to apply Scripture promises and supports, is fit to pass through any adversity. So he that can deny the pride and selfishness of his heart is fit to be employed in any service for God. Such a man was Paul: he not only ministered to others, but looked well to his own vineyard: see 1 Corinthians 9:27. And what an eminent instrument he was for God; he knew how to abound and how to suffer loss. Let the people deify him, it moved him not, except to indignation: let them stone him, he can bear it.

8. By keeping our hearts diligently we should the soonest remove the scandals and stumbling blocks out of the way of the world. O how the worthy name of our Lord is blasphemed because of the wicked conduct of many who bear His name. O what prejudice has been created against the Gospel by the inconsistent lives of those who preached it. But if we keep *our* hearts, we shall not add to the scandals caused by the ways of loose professors. Nay, those with whom we come into contact will see that we “have been with Jesus.” When the majestic beams of holiness shine from a heavenly walk, the world will be awed and respect will again be commanded by the followers of the Lamb. Though the keeping of the heart entails such hard labour, do not such blessed gains supply a sufficient incentive to engage diligently in the same? Look over the eight special benefits we have named, and weigh them in a just balance; they are not trivial things.

Then guard well your heart, and watch closely *its love for God*. Jacob served seven years for Rebekah, and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love that he had unto her. The labour of *love* is always delightful. If God has your heart, the feet will run swiftly in the way of His commandments; duty will be a delight. Then let us earnestly pray, “So teach us to number our days, that we may *apply our hearts* unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12)— as we “apply” our hands unto manual tasks.

Let me now close the whole of these articles with a word or two of consolation to all serious Christians who have sought to faithfully and closely give themselves to this heartwork, but who are groaning in secret over their apparent lack of success therein, and who are fearful that their experience falls short of a saving one. First, this argues that your heart *is* honest and upright. If you are mourning over heart conditions and sins, that is something no hypocrite does. Many a one is now in Hell who had a better heart than mine; many a one now in Heaven complained of as bad a heart as thine.

Second, God would never leave thee under so many heart burdens and troubles if He intended not thy benefit thereby. You say, Lord, why do I go mourning all the day having sorrow of heart? For long have I been exercised over its hardness, and not yet is it broken. Many years have I been struggling against vain thoughts, and still I am plagued by them. O when shall I get a better heart? O that God would thereby show you what your heart by nature is, and have you take notice of how much you are beholden to free grace! So too He would keep you humble, and not fall in love with yourself.

Third, God will shortly put a blessed end to these cares, watchings, and headaches. The time is coming when your heart shall be as you would have it, when you will be delivered from all fears and sorrows, and never again cry, “O my hard, vain, earthy, filthy heart.” Then shall all darkness be purged from your understanding, all vanity from your affections, all guilt from your conscience, all perversity from your will. Then shall you be everlastingly, delightfully, ravishingly entertained and exercised upon the supreme goodness and infinite excellency of God. Soon shall break that morning without clouds, when all the shadows shall flee way; and then we “shall *be like Him*; for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:2). Hallelujah!

For much in these articles, particularly the fourth and final one, we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel.—A.W.P.

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# Studies in the Scriptures

by Arthur W. Pink

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## Studies in the Scriptures

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December, 1933

### **A Warning**

*Marks of Religious Declension*

1. When you are reluctant to religious conversation, and the company of serious, heavenly-minded Christians, and enjoy yourself best with men of the world. 2. When from preference, you are absent from meetings for prayer, confine yourself to Sabbath meetings, are easily detained from them, and are ready to excuse such neglects. 3. When you are afraid to consider certain duties seriously, lest your conscience rebuke past neglect, and insists on fidelity now. 4. When it is more your object, in doing duty, to pacify conscience, than to honour Christ, obtain spiritual profit, or do good to others. 5. When you have an over-critical spirit respecting preaching; are dissatisfied with the manner, as inelegant, too plain, too intelligent, or not according to some favourite model; or with the matter, as too doctrinal, or too perceptive; or when you complain of it as too close, or are suspicious of personality. 6. When you are more afraid of being accounted strict, than of sinning against Christ by negligence, in practise, and unfaithfulness “to your Lord and Master.” 7. When you have little fear of temptations, and can trifle with spiritual danger. 8. When you thirst for the complacency of men of the world, and are more anxious to know what they think or say of you, than whether you honour the Saviour in their sight. 9. When scandals to religion are more the subject of your censure, than of your secret grieving and prayer before God, and faithful endeavours for their removal. 10. When you are more afraid to encounter the scorn of an offending man, by rebuking sin, than of offending God by silence. 11. When you are more bent on being rich than holy. 12. When you cannot receive deserved reproof for faults, are unwilling to confess them, and justify yourself. 13. When you are impatient and unforbearing towards the frailties, misjudgments, and faults of others. 14. When your

reading of the Bible is formal, hasty, lesson-wise, or merely intellectual, and unattended with self-application; or when you read almost any book with more interest than the Book of God. 15. When you have more religion abroad than at home; are apparently fervent when “seen of men,” but languid when seen only in the family or by God alone. 16. When your religious taste is more for the new things of men, than for the old things of the treasury of God's Word. 17. When you call spiritual sloth and withdrawal from Christian activity by the names of prudence and peaceableness, while sinners are going to destruction, and the church suffering declension; unmindful that prudence can be united with apostolic fidelity, and peaceableness with most anxious seeking of the salvation of souls. 18. When, because there is false zeal abroad, you will neither trust yourself nor others, even in that “fervency in spirit, serving the Lord” which Paul taught and practiced. 19. When you are secretly more gratified at the falls of some professor of religion, than grieved for the wounds he inflicts upon Christ. 20. When, under chastisement of Providence, you think more of your sufferings than your deserts, and look more for relief than purification from sin. 21. When you confess, but do not forsake besetting sin. 22. When you acknowledge, but still neglect duty.—

From the “Free Presbyterian Magazine,” author unknown.

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