

Studies in the Scriptures
February, 1937
The Spirit Transforming.

“Mine eye affecteth mine heart” (Lam. 3:51). We are influenced by the objects we contemplate, we become ostensibly assimilated to those with whom we have much intercourse, we are molded by the books we read. This same law or principle operates in the spiritual realm: “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” (2 Cor. 3:18)—beholding, we are changed. Here, then, is our responsibility: to *use* the means which God has appointed for our growth in grace, to be daily occupied with spiritual objects and heavenly things. Yet *our* study and contemplation of the Truth will not, by itself, produce any transformation: there must be a *Divine application* of the Truth to the heart. Apart from the Divine agency and blessing all our efforts and use of the means amount to nothing, and therefore is it added “We are changed . . . *by the Spirit.*”

Just as surely as Christ’s all-mighty power will, on the resurrection morning, transform the bodies of His people from mortality to life and from dishonour to glory, so also does the Holy Spirit now exert a supernatural power in morality transforming the characters of those whom He indwells. The great difference between these two—the future work of Christ upon the bodies of the saints and the present work of the Spirit upon their souls—is that the one will be accomplished instantaneously, whereas the other is effected slowly and gradually; the one we shall be fully conscious of, the other we are largely unconscious of. This being “*changed* into the same image” of the glory of the Lord is a progressive experience, as the “from glory to glory” plainly intimates—from one degree of it to another. It is begun at regeneration, is continued throughout our sanctification, and will be perfected at our glorification.

Now that which deeply exercises and so often keenly distresses the sincere Christian is, that as he seeks to honestly examine himself, he discovers so very little evidence that he IS being “changed into” the image of the Lord. He dare not take anything for granted, but desires to “prove” himself (2 Cor. 13:5). The moral transformation of which we have been treating is that which supplies proof of spiritual illumination, and without at least a measure of it, all supposed saving knowledge of the Truth is but a delusion. We shall therefore endeavour now to point out some of the leading features by which this transformation may be identified, asking the reader to carefully compare himself with each one.

First, where the Spirit has begun to transform a soul *the Divine Law is cordially received as a rule of life*, and the heart begins to echo to the language of Psalm 119 in its commendation. Nothing more plainly distinguishes a true conversion from a counterfeit than this: that one who used to be an enemy to God’s Law is brought understandingly and heartily to love it, and seek to walk according to its requirements. “Hereby we do know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3). He who has been born again has a new palate, so that he now relishes what he formerly disliked. He now begins to prove that it is not only the fittest, but the happiest thing in the world, to aspire to be holy as God is holy, to love Him supremely and live to Him entirely.

Second, *a life of self-loathing*. The regenerated soul perceives that complete and constant subjection to God is His due, and that the gift of His beloved Son has laid him under lasting obligations to serve, please, and glorify Him. But the best of God’s people are

only sanctified in part in this life, and realizing the Law requires, and that God is entitled to sinless perfection from us, what but a life of self-abhorrence must ensue? Once we are supernaturally enlightened to see that “the Law is *spiritual*,” the inevitable consequence *must be* for me to see and feel that “I am *carnal*, sold under sin” (Rom. 7:14). And therefore there must be a continued sense of infinite blame, of self-loathing, of godly sorrow, of broken-heartedness, of hungering and thirsting after righteousness; of watching, praying, striving, or mourning because of frequent defeat.

Third, *genuine humility*. In view of what has just been pointed out, it is easy to see why humility is represented all through Scripture as a dominant feature of those who are quickened by the Spirit. An hypocrite, being experimentally ignorant of Divine Law—never having been slain by it (Rom. 7:9, 11)—then, the more religious he is, the more proud and conceited will he be. But with a true saint it is just the opposite: for if the Law be his rule of duty, and his obligations to conform thereto are infinite, and his blame for every defect is proportionately great; if the fault lie entirely in himself, and his lack of perfect love and obedience to God be wholly culpable, then he must be filled with low and mean thoughts of himself, and have an answerable lowliness of heart.

There is no greater proof that a man is ignorant of the Truth savingly, and a stranger to Christ experimentally, than for spiritual pride to reign in his heart. “Behold, his soul which is *lifted up* is *not upright* in him” (Hab. 2:4). The graceless Pharisee, blind to the real character and purport of the Law, was ready to say, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men”; while the penitent Publican, seeing himself in the light of God, dared not lift up his eyes to Heaven, but smote upon his breast (the seat of his spiritual leprosy) and cried “God *be merciful* to me, the sinner.” The proud religionists of Christ’s day exclaimed, “Behold, we see” (John 9:41); but the holy Psalmist prayed, “Open Thou mine eyes, *that I may* behold wondrous things out of Thy Law.” Thousands of deluded people who profess to be Christians prate about their consecration, victories, and attainments; but the Apostle Paul said, “I count not myself to have apprehended” (Phil. 3:13).

Fourth, *a growing apprehension of the Divine goodness*. The more a quickened soul sees himself in the light of God, the more he discovers how much there still is in him which is opposed to His Law, and in how many respects he daily offends. The more clearly he perceives how very far he comes short of the glory of God, and how unlike Christ he is in character and conduct, the deeper becomes his appreciation of the grace of God through the Mediator. The man who is of a humble, broken and contrite heart, finds the promises of the Gospel just fitted to his case. None but One who is “*mighty* to save” (Isa. 63:1) can redeem such a wretch as he knows himself to be; none but the “God of *all* grace” (1 Peter 5:10) would show favour to one so vile and worthless. “Worthy is the Lamb” is now his song. “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) is his hearty acknowledgment. It is the Spirit’s continued application of the Law to the believer’s conscience which prepares him to receive the comforts and consolations of the Gospel.

When the mind is thoroughly convinced that God can, consistently with His honour, willingly receive to favour the most naked, forlorn, wretched, guilty, hell-deserving of the human race, and become a Father and Friend to him, he is happier than if all the world was his own. When God is his sensible Portion, everything else fades into utter insignificance. The fig tree may not blossom, nor any fruits be in the vine, yet he will “joy in the God of his salvation” (Hab. 3:18). The Apostle, Paul, although a prisoner at Rome, not in

the least dejected, cries "Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4). When God is chosen as our supreme Good, all earthly idols are rejected, and our treasure is laid up in Heaven. In proportion as grace flourishes in the heart our comforts will remain, let outward things go as they will; yea, it will be found that it is "*good* to be afflicted" (Psa. 119:71).

Here, then, are some of the principal effects produced by our being "changed," or reformed, conformed, and transformed by the Spirit of God. There is a growing realization of the ineffable holiness of God and of the righteousness and spirituality of the Law, and the extent of its requirements. There is a deepening sense of our utter sinfulness, failure and blameworthiness, and the daily loathing of ourselves for our hard-heartedness, our base ingratitude, and the ill returns we make to God for His infinite goodness to us. There is a corresponding self-abasement, taking our place in the dust before God, and frankly owning that we are not worthy of the least of His mercies (Gen. 32:10). There is an increasing appreciation of the grace of God and of the provision He has made for us in Christ, with a corresponding longing to be done with this body of death and conformed fully to the lovely image of the Lord; which longings will be completely realized at our glorification.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

110. *Contentment*: 13:5, 6.

Discontent, though few realize it, is *sinful*, a grievous offence against the Most High. It is an impugning of His wisdom, a denial of His goodness, a rising up of my will against His. To murmur at our lot is to take issue with God's sovereignty, quarreling as it does with His providence, and therefore, is a being guilty of high treason against the King of the Universe. Since God orders all the circumstances of human life, then every person ought to be entirely satisfied with the state and situation in which he is placed. One has no more excuse to grumble at his lot than has another. This truth Paul instructed Timothy to press upon others; "Let as many *servants* as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honour, *that* the name of God and his doctrine *be not blasphemed*" (1 Tim. 6:1).

"The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it *cannot rest*, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isa. 57:20, 21). The ungodly are total strangers to real contentment. No matter how much they have, they are ever lusting after more. But God exhorts His people, "Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have" (Heb. 13:5). As it is their bounden duty to avoid the vice of covetousness, so it is their personal responsibility to cultivate the virtue of contentment; and failure at either point is culpable. The contentment here exhorted unto is something other than a fatalistic indifference: it is a holy composure of mind, a resting in the Lord, a being pleased with what pleases Him—satisfied with the portion He has allotted. Anything short of this is evil.

Discontent *is contrary to our prayers*, and therefore must be most reprehensible. When we truly pray, we desire God to give or withhold, to bestow or take away, according as will be most for His glory and our highest good. Realizing that we know not what is best, we leave it with God. In real prayer we submit our understandings to the Divine wisdom, our wills to His good pleasure. But to be dissatisfied with our lot and complain at our portion is to exercise the very opposite spirit, indicating an unwillingness to be at God's disposal, and leaning to our own understanding as though we knew better than He what was most conducive to our present and future well-being. This is a tempting of God and a grieving of His Holy Spirit, and has a strong tendency to provoke Him to fight against us: Isaiah 63:10.

When God *does* fight against us because of this sin, he often gives us what were discontented for the want of, but accompanies the same with some sore affliction. For example, Rachel was in a most discontented frame when she said to Jacob "Give me children, else I die" (Gen. 30:1). The sequel is very solemn: she *had* children, and died in childbirth: see Genesis 35:16-18. Again, we are told that Israel "lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert. And He gave them their request; but *sent* leanness into their soul" (Psa. 106:14, 15). These cases need to be taken to heart by us, for they are recorded for our learning and warning. God takes note of the discontent of our hearts as well as the murmuring of our lips. "Giving thanks *always* for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20) is the standard which He has set before us.

Not only is discontent grievous sin against God, but it *unfits* the Christian for the discharge of holy duties, preventing the exercise of those graces which are necessary in order thereunto. It silences the lips of supplication, for how can a murmurer *pray*? It de-

stroys the spirit of submission, for complaining is a “fretting against the Lord.” It quenches faith, hope and love. Discontent is the very essence of ingratitude, and therefore it stifles the voice of thanksgiving. There cannot be any rest of soul until we quietly resign our persons and portions to God’s good pleasure. Discontent corrodes the strings of the heart, and therefore it arrests all happy endeavour.

Discontent is usually over temporal matters, and this is a sad intimation that material things are sought after more eagerly than are spiritual things. It argues a lack of confidence in the care of our heavenly Father to provide for us the things which are needed. “Christian, let me ask thee this question, Didst thou give thyself to Christ for temporal, or for eternal comforts? Didst thou enter upon religion to save thine estate, or thy soul? Oh, why then shouldst thou be so sad, when thine eternal happiness is so safe? For shame, live like a child of God, an heir of Heaven, and let the world know that thy hopes and happiness are in a *better* world; that thou art denied those acorns which thy Father giveth to His hogs, yet *thou* hast the children’s bread, and expectest thine inheritance when thou comest to age” (G. Swinnock, 1650). What cause have we all to be deeply humbled over our sinful repinings, to hang our heads with shame, and penitently confess the same unto God!

Yet notwithstanding both the sinfulness and injuriousness of discontent, many raise various objections *to excuse* the same. Some will plead their personal temperament is self-vindication; alleging that their natural temper makes them uneasy and anxious, so that they are quite unable to submit themselves unto the disposing providence of God. But, my dear reader, the corruption of our nature and its proneness to sin is no excuse for, but rather an aggravation of it, showing how much our hearts are opposed unto God. The more we yield to our natural inclinations, the more power they obtain over us. In such a case as the above we ought rather to be the more importunate with God, begging Him for His grace to restrain the inordinancy of our affections, to subdue our fears, and work in us willingness to acquiesce to His sovereign pleasure.

Others attempt to justify their discontent and uneasy frame of spirit by alleging that the injuries which others have done them ought to be resented, and that not to manifest discontent under them would be to encourage such people unto further insults and trampling upon them. To this it may be replied that while we complain of injuries done to us by men, and are prone to meditate revenge against them, we do not consider the great dishonour that we bring to God, and how much we provoke Him. It is written, “But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matt. 6:15). Remember that “What glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye 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: who did no sin, neither was guile found in His mouth: who, when He was reviled, reviled not again” (1 Peter 2:20-23).

Others seek to excuse their discontent by dwelling upon the *magnitude* of their trials, saying that their burden is insupportable, so that they are pressed out of measure, above their strength. Even so, none of our afflictions are as great as our sins; and the more we complain, the heavier do we make our burden. Others point out to the altogether *unexpectedness* of their trouble, that it came upon them when they were quite unprepared, and that it is therefore more than flesh and blood can endure. But the Christian should daily expect afflictions in this world, at least so far as not to be unprovided for or think it

strange he should be exercised by them: 1 Peter 4:12. With some the *drastic change* from affluence to poverty is so great they argue that it is impossible to bear up under it. But does not God say, “My grace is sufficient for thee” (2 Cor. 12:9)?

Yet no excuses are to be allowed to set aside or modify this Divine injunction, “Be content with such things as ye have.” But before proceeding further let it be pointed out that contentment is not incompatible with honest effort to enlarge the provision of earthly things for ourselves and those dependent upon us, for God has give us six days out of seven to be industrious. Idleness must not be allowed to cloak itself under the guise of this grace: contentment and indolence are two vastly different things. “This contentment does not consist in a slothful neglect of the business of life, nor of a real nor pretended apathy to worldly interests. It is substantially a satisfaction with God as our portion and with what He is pleased to appoint for us. It is opposed to covetousness or the inordinate desire of wealth, and to unbelieving anxiety—dissatisfaction with what is present, distrust as to what is future” (John Brown).

Contentment is a tranquility of soul, a being satisfied with what God has apportioned. It is the opposite of a grasping spirit which is never appeased, with distrustful anxiety, with petulant murmurings. “It is a gracious disposedness of mind, arising solely from trust in and satisfaction with God alone, against all other things whatever that appear to be evil” (John Owen). It is our duty to have the scales of our heart so equally poised in all God’s dealings with us that they rise not in prosperity, nor sink in adversity. As the tree bendeth this way or that way with the wind, yet still keeps its place, so we should yield, bending to the gales of Divine providence, yet still remaining steadfast and retaining our piety. The more composure of mind we preserve, the more shall we, on the one hand, “re-joice with trembling” (Psa. 2:11), and on the other, “faint not” when the chastening rod falls upon us.

As this spiritual grace of contentment is so glorifying to God, and so beneficial to ourselves, we will endeavour to mention some of the chief *aids* thereto. First, *a realization of God’s goodness*. A deep and fixed sense of His benevolence greatly tends to quieten the heart when outward circumstances are trying to us. If I have formed the habit of mediating daily upon God’s fatherly care—and surely I am constantly surrounded by proofs and tokens thereof—then I shall be less apt to chafe and fret when His providences cross my will. Has He not assured me 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)? What more can I ask? O to rest in His love. Surely He is entitled to my confidence in His paternal solicitude. Remember that each murmur implies unthankfulness. Complaining is the basest of ingratitude. If the Lord provides for the ravens, will He overlook the needs of any of His children? O ye of little faith!

Second, *a steady realization of God’s omniscience*. A deep and fixed sense of His unsearchable wisdom is well calculated to allay our fears and compose our minds when everything appears to be going wrong with our circumstances. Settle it in your mind once for all, dear friend, that “the high and lofty One” makes no mistakes. His understanding is infinite, and His resources are without measure. He knows far better than we do what is for our well-being and what will best promote our *ultimate* interests. Then let me not be found pitting my puny reason against the ways of the all-wise Jehovah. It is nought but pride and self-will which complains at His dealings with me. As another has said, “Now if one creature can and ought to be governed by another that is more wise than himself—

as the client by his learned counsel, the patient by his skillful physician—much more should we be satisfied with the unerring dispositions of God.” Remember that complaining never relieves a single woe or lightens a single burden; it is therefore most irrational.

Third, *a steady realization of God's supremacy*. A deep and fixed sense of His absolute sovereignty, His indisputable right to do as He pleases in the ordering of all our affairs, should do much to subdue the spirit of rebellion and silence our foolish and wicked murmurings. It is not the Almighty's pleasure to give unto all alike, but rather that some should have more and others less: “The LORD maketh poor, and maketh rich: He bringeth low, and lifteth up. He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill, to set them among princes” (1 Sam. 2:7, 8). Then quarrel not with the Most High because He distributes His gifts and favours unequally; but rather seek grace that thy will may be brought into subjection to His. It is written “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on Thee” (Isa. 26:3). Consider how many lack some of the good things which thou enjoyest. “Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! . . . Shall the clay say to Him that fashioneth it, What makest Thou?” (Isa. 45:9).

Fourth, *a steady realization of our ill-deserts*. A deep and fixed sense of our utter unworthiness must do much to still our repinings when we are tempted to complain of the absence of those things our hearts covet. If we live under an habitual sense of our unworthiness, it will greatly reconcile us to deprivations. If we daily remind ourselves that we have forfeited all good and deserve all ill at the hands of God, then we shall heartily acknowledge “It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed” (Lam. 3:22). Nothing will more quickly compose the mind in the face of adversity and nothing will so prevent the heart being puffed up by prosperity, than the realization that “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies” (Gen. 32:10) of God. Just so far as we really preserve a sense of our ill-deserts will we meekly submit to the allotments of Divine providence. Every Christian cordially assents to the truth “He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor rewarded us according to our iniquities” (Psa. 103:10), then why complain if God withholds from us what He grants to others?

Fifth, *weanedness from the world*. The more dead we are to the things of time and sense, the less our hearts will crave them, and the smaller will be our disappointment when we do not have them. This world is the great impediment to the heavenly life, being the bait of the flesh and the snare of Satan by which he turns souls from God. The lighter we hold the world's attractions, the more indifferent we are to either poverty or wealth, the greater will be our contentment. God has promised to supply all our needs, therefore “having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8). Superfluities are hindrances and not helps. “Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith” (Prov. 15:16). Remember that the contented man is the only one who *enjoys* what he has. “Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:2).

Sixth, *fellowship with God*. The more we cultivate communion with Him and are occupied with His perfections, the less shall we lust after the baubles which have such a hold upon the ungodly. Walking with God produces a peace and joy such as this poor world can neither give nor take away. “There be many that say, Who will show us any good? LORD, lift Thou up the light of *Thy* countenance upon us. Thou hast put gladness in my heart, *more* than in the time that *their* corn and their wine increased” (Psa. 4:6, 7). Walking in the way of God's commands is a real antidote to discontent: “Great peace

have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119:165). Seventh, *remembrance of what Christ suffered*. “For consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds” (Heb. 12:3). When tempted to complain at your lot, meditate upon Him who when here had not where to lay His head, who was constantly misunderstood by friends and hated by innumerable enemies. Contemplation of the Cross of Christ is a wonderful composer of an agitated mind and a querulous spirit.

“Be content with such things as ye have; *for* He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.” Here is an enforcement of what has just gone before, a reason for the duties enjoined, a motive supplied for the performance of them. One of the Divine promises is quoted, which if it be duly appropriated by us, we shall be dissuaded from covetousness and persuaded to contentment. Resting on this Divine assurance will both moderate our desires and alleviate our fears. “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee” is a guarantee of God’s continual provision and protection, and this rebukes all inordinate desires and condemns all anxious fears. The evils are closely connected, for in most instances covetousness, in the Christian, is rooted in a fear of want; while discontent generally arises from a suspicion that our present portion will prove to be inadequate for the supply of our needs. Each such disquietude is equally irrational and God-dishonouring.

Both covetousness and discontent proceed from unbelief. If I really trust God, will I have any qualms about the future or tremble at the prospect of starvation? Certainly not: the two things are incompatible, opposites—“I will trust, and not be afraid” (Isa. 12:2). Thus the Apostle’s argument is clear and convincing: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; be content with such things as ye have: *for* He hath said, I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” The “*for He* hath said” is more forcible than “*for God* hath said”: it is the *character* of the One with whom we have to do that is here held up to our view. “He has said”—*who* has? Why, One whose power is omnipotent, whose wisdom is infinite, whose faithfulness is inviolable, whose love is unchanging. “All the efficacy, power and comfort of Divine promises arise from and are resolved into the excellencies of the Divine nature. He hath said it who is *truth*, and cannot deceive” (J. Owen).

And *what is it* that He has said, which, if faith truly lays hold of, will subdue covetousness and work contentment? *This*, “I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” God’s presence, God’s providence, God’s protection, are here assured us. If due regard be paid to these inestimable blessings, the heart will be kept in peace. What more would we have? Save a conscious realization of the same. O for a felt sense of His presence, for a gracious manifestation thereof to the soul. What were all the wealth, honors, pleasures of the world worth, if He should totally and finally desert us! The comfort of our soul does not depend upon outward provisions, so much as on our appropriation and enjoyment of what is contained in the Divine promises. If we rested more on them, we would crave less of this world’s goods. What possible cause or ground for fear remains when God has pledged us *His* continual presence and assistance?

“I will never leave thee nor forsake thee.” It is almost impossible to reproduce in English the emphasis of the original, in which no less than five negatives are used to increase the strength of the negation, according to the Greek idiom. Perhaps the nearest approximation is to render it, “I will never, no, never, leave thee, nor ever forsake thee.” In view of such assurance we should feel no want, dread no distress, nor have any trepidation about the future. At no time, under any circumstances conceivable or unconceivable, for

any possible cause, will God utterly and finally forsake one of His own. Then how *safe* they are! How impossible for one of them to eternally perish! God has here graciously condescended to give the utmost security to the faith of believers in all their difficulties and trials. The continued presence of God with us ensures the continued supply of every need.

“For He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Heb. 13:5). These words were first spoken by Jehovah to the successor of Moses (Josh. 1:5), whose task it was to dispossess Canaan of all the heathen nations then inhabiting it. The fact that the Holy Spirit moved the Apostle to apply unto Christians this promise made to Joshua, supplies the clear proof that our modern dispensations *wrongly divide* the Word of Truth. Their practice of partitioning the Scriptures and their contention that what God said under one dispensation does not apply to those living in another, is here exposed as nothing less than an effort of Satan’s to rob God’s people of a part of their rightful and needful portion. This precious promise of God belongs as truly to me now as it did to Joshua of old. Let, then, this principle be tenaciously held by us: the Divine promises which were made upon special occasions to particular individuals are of *general* use for *all* the members of the household of faith.

What has just been affirmed is so obvious that it should require no further proof or illustration; but inasmuch as it is being repudiated in some influential quarters today, we will labour the point a little. Are not the needs of believers the same in one age as another? Is not God affected alike unto all His children?—does He not bear them the same love? If, then, He would not desert Joshua, then He will not any of us. Are not Christians now under the same Everlasting Covenant of Grace as were the Old Testament saints? Then they have a common charter—“For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to *all* that are afar off” (Acts 2:39). Let us not forget that “Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that *we* through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Rom. 15:4).

“So *that* we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6). An inference is here drawn from the promise just quoted: a double conclusion is reached—confidence in God and courage against man. This intimates we should make a varied and manifold use of the Divine promises. This twofold conclusion is based upon *the character* of the Promiser: because He is infinitely good, wise, faithful, powerful, and because He changes not, we may boldly or confidently declare with Abraham “God will provide” (Gen. 22:8), with Jonathan, “there is no restraint to the Lord” (1 Sam. 14:6), with Jehoshaphat “None is able to withstand Thee” (2 Chron. 20:6), with Paul “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Rom. 8:31).

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my Helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb. 13:6). Once more the Apostle confirms his argument by a Divine testimony, for he quotes from Psalm 118:6. In this citing of David’s language, Christians are again taught the suitability of Old Testament language unto their own case, and the permissibility of appropriating the same unto themselves: “*we* may boldly say” just what the Psalmist did! It was in a time of sore distress that David expressed his confidence in the Lord, at a time when it appeared that his enemies were ready to swallow him up; but contrasting the omnipotency of Jehovah from the feebleness of the creature, his heart was emboldened. The believer is weak and unstable in himself, and constantly in need of assistance, but the Lord is ever ready to take his part and render all needed aid.

“The Lord is my Helper” implies, as W. Gouge pointed out, “a willing readiness and a ready willingness to afford us all needed succour.” Those whom He forsakes not, He *helps*—both inwardly and outwardly. Note carefully the change from “we may boldly say” to “the Lord is *my* Helper”; general privileges are to be appropriated by us in particular. “Man can do much; he can fine, imprison, banish, reduce to a morsel of bread, yea, torture and put to death; yet as long as God is with us and standeth for us, we may boldly say, ‘I will not fear what man can do.’ Why? God will not see thee utterly perish. He can give joy in sorrow, life in death” (Thomas Manton).

May the Lord graciously grant both writer and reader more faith in Himself, more reliance upon His promises, more consciousness of His presence, more assurance of His help, and then we shall enjoy more deliverance from covetousness, discontent, and the fear of man.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

62. His Flight.

There are few incidents in the checkered life of David more pathetic than the one which is now to engage our attention, illustrating as it does the providential ups and downs and the alternating spiritual prosperity and adversity which is the lot of God's people on this earth. All is not unclouded sunshine with them, nor is it unrelieved gloom and storm. There is a mingling of both—joys and sorrows, victories and defeats, assistance from friends and injuries from foes, smiles from the Lord's countenance and the hiding of His face. By such changes opportunities are afforded for the development and exercise of *different* graces, so that we may, in our measure, "know how to be abased and how to abound . . . both to be full and to be empty" (Phil. 4:12). But above all, that we may, amid varying circumstances, prove the unchanging faithfulness of God and His sufficiency to supply our every need.

David was called to leave the lowly plains of Bethlehem to participate in the honours of Saul's palace. From tending the flock he became the conqueror of Goliath and the popular hero of Israel. But soon Saul's friendship was changed to enmity and David had to flee for his life, and for many weary months he was hunted as a partridge on the mountains. Subsequently his fortunes were again greatly altered and from being an outcast he was crowned king of Israel. Then he was enabled to capture Jerusalem, the stronghold of Zion, which became "the city of David" (2 Sam. 5:7). There he established his court and there he "brought up the ark of the LORD with shouting and with the voice of the trumpet" (2 Sam. 6:15). But now we are to behold him fleeing from Jerusalem and being separated from the holy ark: a fugitive once more, in humiliation and deep anguish.

Ah, my reader, if you be one of God's elect, expect not a smooth and easy path down here, but be prepared for varying circumstances and drastic changes. The Christian's resting place is not in this world, for "here have we no continuing city" (Heb. 13:14). The Christian is a "pilgrim," on a journey; he is a "soldier," called on to fight the good fight of faith. The more this be realized, the less keen will be the disappointment when our ease is disturbed and our outward peace rudely broken in upon. "Many are the afflictions of the righteous," and if they come not to us in one form, they most certainly will in another. If we really "appropriate" *this promise* (!) then we shall not be so staggered when those afflictions come upon us. It is written that "we must through *much* tribulation enter into the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22), and therefore we should make up our minds *to expect* the same, and to "think it not strange" (1 Peter 4:12) when we are called upon to pass through "the fiery trial."

Affliction, tribulation, and fiery trial were now David's portion. "And there came a messenger to David, saying, The hearts of the men of Israel are after Absalom" (2 Sam. 15:13). Visualize the sad scene: the dark clouds of a threatened revolt had been steadily gathering, and now the storm bursts on the king's head. By this time David was some sixty years of age, with health and strength greatly impaired. Ahithophel, his trusted counsellor, had deserted him. Absalom, his favourite son, was now risen in rebellion against him. Not only his throne, but his very life was in danger, together with the lives of his wives and their little ones—Solomon was scarcely 10 years old at this time. What, then, does the king do? Nothing! There was no calling of a counsel, no effort made to provision Jerusalem for the withstanding of a siege, no determination to stand his rightful ground and resist his lawless son.

“And David said unto all his servants that were with him at Jerusalem, Arise, and let us flee; for we shall not else escape from Absalom: make speed to depart, lest he overtake us suddenly, and bring evil upon us, and smite the city with the edge of the sword” (2 Sam. 15:14). Now that at last the blow falls, David passively acquiesces in what he evidently felt to be God’s righteous chastisement upon him. When the awful news arrives that Absalom had set up the standard of revolt at Hebron, David’s only thought was immediate flight. The intrepid warrior was now almost cowardly in his eagerness to escape, and was prepared to give up everything without a blow. It seemed as though only a touch was needed to overthrow his throne. He hurries on the preparations for flight with nervous haste. He forms no plans beyond those of his earlier wish to fly away and be at rest.

That David had good reason to conclude the situation which now confronted him was *a just retribution* upon his own crimes is quite evident. First, the Lord had declared, “I will raise up evil against thee out of thine own house” (2 Sam. 12:11), fulfilled here in the insurrection of his favourite son. Other evidences thereof will come before us later, but at this point we will consider, second, Ahithophel’s joining hands with the rebel. No sooner had Absalom determined to execute his daring plan than he looked to Ahithophel. He appears, for some reason not specifically mentioned, to have confidently counted upon his cooperation; nor was he disappointed. “And Absalom sent for Ahithophel the Gilonite, David’s counsellor, from his city, even from Giloh” (2 Sam. 15:12). It is to be carefully noted that immediately after Ahithophel’s coming to Absalom, we are informed, “And the conspiracy was strong; for the people *increased* continually with Absalom” (v. 12)—intimating that Ahithophel was a host in himself.

“And the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom” (2 Sam. 16:23): in view of this statement we need not be surprised that his joining heart and hand with Absalom so greatly strengthened his cause. There is no doubt that *he* was the chief instrument in this conspiracy, and the prime reason why so many in Israel turned from the king to his traitorous son. His official status and the great influence which he possessed over the people made Absalom glad to avail himself of his help, both to sink the spirits of David’s party and to inspire his own with confidence, for Ahithophel was commonly regarded as a prophet. But *what was it* that made Ahithophel to respond so readily to Absalom’s invitation, and cause him to find still greater favour in the eyes of the people, as one who had been grievously wronged and deserved to be avenged of his adversity?

To answer this question the Scriptures must be searched and passage carefully compared with passage. In the second half of 2 Samuel 23 the names are given of the thirty-seven men who formed the special body “guard” (v. 23) of David. Among them we find “Eliam the son of Ahithophel *the Gilonite*” (v. 34) and “Uriah the Hittite” (v. 39). Thus Eliam and Uriah were fellow-officers and would be much thrown together. Hence, we need not be surprised to learn that Uriah married the daughter of Eliam (see 2 Samuel 11:3). Thus Bathsheba, whom David so grievously wronged, was *the granddaughter of Ahithophel*; and Uriah, whom he so cruelly murdered, was his grandson by marriage! Does not *this* fact explain why David’s “familiar friend” (Psa. 41:9) become his deadly foe, and account for this readiness to aid Absalom—thus seeking to avenge the dishonour brought upon his house?

Some years had passed since this dishonour had come upon the family of Ahithophel, and during that interval it appears that he had turned his back upon David and the court, and had quietly retired to his birthplace (15:12). Brooding over the grievous wrongs which David had done to his family, the spirit of revenge would rankle in his heart. It seems that Absalom was well aware of this, and perceived that Ahithophel was only waiting for a suitable opportunity to give vent to his feelings and execute his meditated wrath upon the head of David. Does not this explain why Absalom approached him *with confidence*, made known to him his treason, and counted on him welcoming the news and becoming his fellow-worker? Does not this also account for so many of the people transferring their allegiance from a throne which they knew to be defiled with adultery and murder to the rebellious son?

Not only does Ahithophel's blood-relationship to Bathsheba explain his readiness to take sides with Absalom against the king, and account for the common peoples' transference of loyalty, but it also supplies the key to David's own attitude and conduct at this time. It was additional evidence to him that *God* was now dealing with him for his sins—other proofs of this will come before us later, but we must not anticipate. And most blessed is it to observe him bowing so meekly to the Divine rod. David felt that to withstand Absalom would be to resist the Lord Himself; therefore, instead of strengthening his forces in Jerusalem and maintaining his ground, he flees. We cannot but admire the lovely fruit brought forth by the Spirit at this time in David's heart, for *to Him*, and not to mere nature, must be attributed that which is here presented to our view.

Long before this we had occasion to admire the beautiful spirit evidenced by David when suffering *for righteousness*—now we behold it again when he was suffering *for transgressions*. Then we saw him as *the martyr* in the days of Saul, bringing forth the fruits of meekness, patience, and confidence in God, willing to be hounded by Saul day after day, and refusing to take vengeance into his own hands and smite the Lord's anointed. But here we see David as *the penitent*: his sin has found him out, brought into remembrance before God, and he submissively bows his head and accepts the consequences of his wrong-doing. This is very beautiful, manifesting again the workmanship of the Spirit of God in David. He alone can quieten the turbulent heart, subdue the rebellious will, and mortify that innate desire to take matters into our own hands; as He alone can bring us to humble ourselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and hold our peace when He visits our iniquity "with stripes" (Psa. 89:32).

Yes, it is, as we said in our opening paragraph, *changing circumstances* that afford opportunity for the development and exercise of *different* graces. Some graces are of the active and aggressive kind, while others are of a passive order, requiring quite another setting for their display. Some of the traits which mark the soldier on a battlefield would be altogether out of place were he languishing on a bed of sickness. Spiritual joy and godly sorrow is equally beautiful in its season. It would be most incongruous to mourn while the Bridegroom was present, but it is fitting for the children of the Bridechamber to fast when He is absent. As there are certain vegetables, fruits, and flowers which cannot be grown in lands which are unvisited by nipping winds and biting frosts, so there are some fruits of the Spirit which are only produced in the soil of severe trials, troubles and tribulations.

"And the king's servants said unto the king, Behold, thy servants are ready to do whatsoever my lord the king shall appoint" (2 Sam. 15:15). What we have just said above is

equally pertinent to this verse; the sad situation confronting David revealed plainly the state of heart of those in his immediate employ. The revolt of Absalom and his stealing the hearts of so many of the people afforded an opportunity for these servants of David to manifest *their* unswerving loyalty and deep devotion to their master. Very blessed is this, supplying as it does the sequel to what was before us in verse six. There we saw that Absalom was a man well-calculated to captivate the multitude. But let it be duly noted that he possessed no attractions for those who were nearest to David. That illustrates an important principle: while we maintain communion with Christ, the antitypical David, the baits of Satan will have no influence over us!

Let us observe, too, that changing circumstances are necessary in order to test the loyalty of those who are on intimate terms with us. Not only did this revolt of Absalom's provide an occasion for the manifestation of David's subjection to the will of God, but it also served to make unmistakably evident who were for and who were against David. Prosperity is often a mixed blessing, and adversity is far from being an unmixed calamity. When the sunshine of Providence smiles upon a person, he is soon surrounded by those who profess great attachment to him; but when the dark clouds of Providence cover his horizon, most of those fawning flatterers will quickly take their departure. Ah, my reader, it is worth something to discover who really *are* our friends, and therefore we should not murmur if it takes the shaking of our nest and the disrupting of our peace to make this plainly evident to us. Adversities are a gain when they expose to us the hypocrisy of an Ahithophel, and still more so when they prove the loyalty and love of the few who stand by us in the storm.

"And the king went forth, and all his household after him. And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house" (2 Sam. 15:16). The writer feels his heart awed as he reads the second half of this verse—a very prosaic statement, yet one possessing depths which no human mind can fathom. Apparently David acted quite freely when he made this simple domestic arrangement, yet really he could do no otherwise, for he was being *directed* by the unerring and invincible hand of God, unto the outworking of His own counsels. *David's* object in leaving behind the ten concubines was "to keep the house," that is, to maintain the palace in some order and cleanliness; but *God's* design was to make good His own Word.

A part of the punishment which the Lord had announced should fall upon David for his evildoing was, "I will take thy wives before thine eyes, and give them unto thy neighbour, and he shall lie with thy wives in the sight of this sun. For thou didst it secretly; but I will do this thing before all Israel" (2 Sam. 12:11, 12). The execution of that threat is recorded in, "So they spread Absalom a tent upon the top of the house; and Absalom went in unto his father's concubines in the sight of all Israel" (16:22). The connecting link between the two is seen here in our present passage: "And the king left ten women, which were concubines, to keep the house" (2 Sam. 15:16). Again, we say David's object in leaving them behind was that they should "keep the house," but *God's* purpose was that they should be publicly insulted, raped by Absalom. Unspeakably solemn is this fact: *God directs* those actions which eventuate in evil as truly as He does those which terminate in good. Not only all events, but all persons, and their every action, are under the immediate control of the Most High.

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are *all* things: to whom be glory forever" (Rom. 11:36). Yet this neither makes God the "Author of sin" nor man an irresponsible

creature; God is holy in all His ways, and man is accountable for all his actions. Whether or not we perceive the “consistency” of them, each of these basic truths must be held fast by us—nor must one be so maintained that the other is virtually negated. Some will argue, If God has foreordained our every action, then we are no better than machines; others insist, If man is a free agent, his actions cannot be directed by God. But Holy Writ exposes the vanity of such reasonings; so far as David knew it was a voluntary act on his part when he decided to leave ten of his concubines in the house, nevertheless he was Divinely “constrained” in it for the accomplishment of God’s purpose.

“And the king went forth, and all the people after him, and tarried in a place that was far off. And all his servants passed on beside him; and all the Cherethites, and all the Pelethites, and all the Gittites, six hundred men which came after him from Gath, passed on before the king” (2 Sam. 15:17, 18). No, “fair weather friends” were these. They had enjoyed with him the calm, they would not desert him in the storm; they had shared the privileges of Jerusalem, they would not abandon him now that he had become a fugitive and outcast. It is striking to note that while Absalom “stole the hearts of the men of Israel,” *all* the Cherethites, Pelethites, and Gittites remained steadfast to David—a foreshadowment of Christ, for whereas the Jewish nation despised and rejected Him, yet God’s elect among the Gentiles have not been ashamed to be His followers.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

5. *The Siniatic.*

As we have seen, that which pre-eminently characterised the Mosaic dispensation was the prominent and dominant position accorded to *the Law*. Not only was that dispensation formally inaugurated by Jehovah Himself proclaiming the Decalogue from Sinai—the exodus from Egypt and the journey across the wilderness being but introductory thereto—but those Ten Words were given the place of supreme honour. The tables of stone upon which they had been inscribed were assigned to the tabernacle. Now the most sacred vessel in the tabernacle, and that which formed the very centre of all the services connected with it, was *the ark*. It was the special symbol of the Lord's covenant presence and faithfulness, for upon its cover was the throne on which He sat as King in Israel. Yet that ark was made on purpose to house the two tables of the Law, and was called “the ark of the covenant” simply because it contained the agreed-upon articles of the covenant. Thus those Ten Words were plainly recognized as containing in themselves the sum and substance of that righteousness which the covenant strictly required.

The very position, then, which the two tables of stone occupied, intimated most plainly that *the observance of the Law* was God's great end in the establishment of Judaism. The Law, perfect in its character and perpetual in its obligation, formed the foundation of all the symbolical institutions of worship which was afterwards imposed. As the centre of Judaism was the tabernacle, so the centre of the tabernacle was *the Law*, for the sacred ark, which was enshrined in the holy of holies and had been built specially for the housing of it. Thus the thoughtful worshipper could scarcely fail to perceive that *obedience to the Law* was the pre-eminent reason for which the Levitical economy was appointed. Every strictly religious rite and institution ordained by God through Moses was intended as a means to enforce the principles and precepts of the Law, or as remedies to provide against the evils which inevitably arose from its neglect and violation.

The *real relation* which existed between the ceremonial and the moral Law has not been sufficiently recognized, and therefore we will now consider at more length the true design and spiritual purpose of the Levitical code. The Decalogue itself was *the foundation* of the tabernacle service, all its symbolical ceremonies pointing to it as their common ground and centre. In other words, the ceremonial institutions were *entirely subservient* to the righteousness which the Law required. Let it be remembered that it was not until *after* the Siniatic Covenant had been formally ratified that the ritual of the Levitical system was given. Thus its very place in the history denotes that the ceremonial law is to be regarded not as of primary, but only of *secondary* moment in the constitution of God's kingdom in Israel. God had called Israel to occupy a place of peculiar nearness to Himself, so He first made known to them the great principles of Truth and righteousness which were to regulate their lives, and then that there should be a visible bond of fellowship, by placing in their midst a dwellingplace for Himself; appointing everything in connection therewith in such a manner as to impress them with the character of their King and of what became them as His subjects.

Most strikingly was *the subserviency* of the ceremonial to the moral Law signified in connection with the Divine appointments concerning the tabernacle. All was to be ordered according to the pattern shown to Moses in the mount, while the people were to signify their readiness to submit to God's will by contributing the required materials (Exo. 25:2-9). Now the *first* thing to be made was not the framework (walls) of the taber-

nacle itself, nor that which belonged to the outer court, but instead *the ark of the covenant* (Exo. 25:20-22), which was the repository of the Decalogue! The ark was given the precedence of everything else—altar, laver, lamp stand, and table of showbread! Thus it was plainly intimated that *the ark* was the most sacred piece of furniture pertaining to the house of God—the centre from which all spiritual fellowship with the Lord was to proceed and derive its essential character. Thus an unmistakable link of connection between the ceremonial and the moral Law, and the subordination of the one to the other, was impressed from the first on the very constitution of the tabernacle.

Now the chief lesson inculcated by the ceremonial law, proclaimed by numerous rites and ordinances, was, that the holy and righteous have access to God's fellowship and blessing; whereas the unclean and wicked are excluded. But *who constituted* the one class, and who the other? Not simply those who observed, or refused to observe, the mere letter of the ceremonial law, but rather those who possessed in reality that which was therein symbolized, and *that* was ascertained only in the light of God Himself. He had revealed His character in that law of moral duty which He took for the foundation of His throne and the centre of His government in Israel. There the "line and plummet" of right and wrong, of holy and unholy in God's sight, was set up, and the Levitical code itself *implied* that very "line and plummet," and called men's attention to it by its manifold prescriptions concerning clean and unclean, defilement and purification.

The "divers washing" of the ceremonial law and its ever-recurring atonements by blood pointed to existing impurities, but what many have failed to recognize is, that those very impurities *were such* because *at variance with* the law of righteousness. "The Decalogue had pointed, by the predominantly negative form of its precepts, to the prevailing tendency in human nature to sin; and in like manner the Levitical code, by making everything that directly bore on generation and birth a source of uncleanness, perpetually reiterated in men's ears the lesson that corruption cleaved to them, that they were conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity. The very institution of a separate order for immediate approach to God, and performing, in behalf of the community, the most sacred offices of religion, was a visible sign of actual shortcomings and transgressions among the people: it was a standing testimony that they were *not holy* after the lofty pattern of holiness exhibited in the law of Jehovah's throne.

"The distinction, also, between clean and unclean *in food*, while it deprived them of nothing that was required either to gratify the taste or minister nourishment to the bodily life—granted them, indeed, what was best adapted for both—yet served as a daily monitor in respect to the spiritual dangers that encompassed them and of the necessity of exercising themselves to a careful choosing between one class of things and another; reminded them of a good that was to be followed and of an evil to be shunned. And then there is a whole series of defilements springing from contact with what is emphatically the wages of sin—*death*, or death's livid image, the leprosy, which, wherever it alighted, struck a fatal blight into the organism of nature, and rendered it a certain prey to corruption:—things, the very sight and touch of which formed a call to humiliation, because carrying with them the mournful evidence, that, while sojourners with God, men still found themselves in the region of corruption and death" (The Revelation of Law in Scripture by P. Fairbairn, 1869, to whom we are also indebted for other thoughts in this article).

In the light of what has been said above, it will be seen that “the law of carnal ordinances” contained *most important instruction* for the people: that is, not when considered by itself, but when regarded (according to its proper design) as an auxiliary to the Ten Commandments. But if the ceremonial law be isolated from them, and be regarded as possessing an independent use and value, then its message had flatly repudiated the truth, for in such case it had encouraged men to rely upon mere outward distinction and rest in corporeal observances. But *that* had been contradictory rather than complementary of the Decalogue, for *it* throws all the emphasis upon the moral element, both in the Divine character and the obedience which He requires from His people. Kept, however, in its proper place, of subordination to the moral law, the Levitical code furnished most important instruction for Israel, keeping steadily before them the fact that *sin* brought defilement and shut out from fellowship with the Holy One.

That the Levitical ordinances had merely a *subsidiary value*, and that they derived all their importance from the connection in which they stood with the moral precepts of the Law, is evident from other considerations. It is clearly demonstrated by the fact that when the special judgments of Heaven were denounced against the covenant people, it never was for neglect of the ceremonial observances, but always for flagrant violations of the Ten Commandments—let the reader carefully ponder the following passages in proof: Jeremiah 7:22-31, Ezekiel 8 and 18:1-3, Hosea 4:1-3, Amos 3:4-9, Micah 5 and 6. It is evident again from the fact that whenever the indispensable conditions of entrance to God’s House and of abiding fellowship with Him are set forth, they are seen to be in conformity to the moral precepts, and not to the ceremonial observances: Psalms 15 and 24. Finally, it is evident from the fact that when the people exalted ceremonialism above practical obedience, the procedure was denounced as idolatry and the service rejected as a mockery: see 1 Samuel 15:22; Psalm 45:7; Isaiah 1:2; Micah 6:8.

Having dwelt upon the relation which existed between the ceremonial and the moral law—the one being strictly subservient to the other, the one reiterating the testimony of the other concerning holiness and sin—let us now consider another and quite different aspect of it. The Decalogue itself proclaimed the righteous requirements of the Lord, and therefore it made no allowance for disobedience and no provision for the disobedient; all it did was to threaten condemnation, and the awful penalty it announced could inspire nought but terror. But with the Levitical code it was quite otherwise: *there* was a mediatorial priesthood, *there* were sacrifices for obtaining forgiveness, *there* were ordinances for cleansing; and the design of these was to secure restoration of fellowship with God for those whose sins excluded them from His holy presence. Thus, while these ordinances were far from making light of sin, for those who repented and humbled themselves, they mercifully procured reconciliation to the Lawgiver.

It should, however, be carefully noted that God impressed very definite limits to *the scope of* the expiatory sacrifices. And necessarily so: had there been no restrictions, had the way been open, at all times, for any one and every one, to obtain remission and cleansing, then the Levitical code had granted a corrupt and fatal license, for in that case men could have gone on in a deliberate course of evil, assured that further sacrifices would expiate their guilt. Therefore we see Divine holiness tempering Divine mercy, by appointing sacrifices for the sins of ignorance only, or for those defilements which were contracted unwittingly or unavoidably; whereas for flagrant and willful transgressors of the Ten Commandments there remained nought but summary judgment. Thereby a gra-

cious provision was made for what we may term sins of infirmity, while justice was meted out to the lawless and defiant.

The distinction to which we have just called attention, or the limitation made in the Levitical code for the obtaining of pardon, is clearly expressed in, "If any soul sin through ignorance, then he shall bring a she goat of the first year for a sin offering. And the priest shall make an atonement for the soul *that sinneth ignorantly*, when he sinneth by ignorance before the LORD, to make an atonement for him; and it shall be forgiven him. Ye shall have one law for him that sinneth through ignorance, both for him that is born among the children of Israel, and for the stranger that sojourneth among them. But the soul that *doeth ought presumptuously*, (with a high hand), whether he be born in the land, or a stranger, the same reproacheth the LORD; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath despised the Word of the LORD, and hath broken His commandment, that soul shall *utterly be cut off*; his iniquity shall be upon him" (Num. 15:27-31).

But while there *was this* great difference between the ceremonial and the moral Law—a merciful provision made for certain transgressors of it—yet we may clearly perceive how Divine wisdom protected the Decalogue from dishonour, yea, by the very limitations of that provision upheld its righteous demands. "So that here, again, the Levitical code of ordinances *lent on* the fundamental law of the Decalogue, and did obeisance to its supreme authority. Only they who devoutly recognised this law, and in their conscience strove to walk according to its precepts, had any title to and interest in the provisions sanctioned for the blotting out of transgression. Then, as now, 'to walk in darkness' or persistently adhere to the practice of iniquity, was utterly incompatible with having fellowship with God—1 John 1:6" (P. Fairbairn).

Yet, let it be pointed out, on the other hand, that God is *sovereign*, high above all Law, and by no means tied to the restrictions which He has placed on His creatures. This grand truth ever needs to be clearly and boldly proclaimed, never more so than in our day, when such low and dishonouring views of God so widely prevail. When Jehovah made known Himself to Moses He said, "The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty; visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children" (Exo. 34:6, 7). That precious word was ever available *to faith*, as Numbers 14:17-20 and other passages blessedly show. True, even in this passage there is a solemn warning that Justice will not forgo its claims, that obstinate rebels should meet their deserts. Yet *that* is given the second place, while *grace* occupies the foreground.

It was *that* which inspired relief in humble and penitent hearts: *God is gracious*. Thus, though at every point the Israelite was taught that sin is a most solemn and serious matter, and that neither the moral nor the ceremonial law made any provision of mercy where certain offences were committed, yet that did not prevent the Lord dealing with them on a footing of pure grace. The revealed character of God opened a door of hope unto contrite souls, even when their case appeared utterly hopeless. A striking illustration of this is found in the 51st Psalm. There we see David, after the commission of sins for which the Law demanded the death penalty, and for which no Levitical sacrifice was of any avail (v. 16), acknowledging with a broken heart his heinous transgressions, casting himself on God's *unconditional* forgiveness (v. 1), and obtaining pardon from Him.

To give completeness to our present line of study one other feature respecting Levitical institutions requires to be noticed. Considered from one viewpoint the ceremonial oblations and ablutions were a real *privilege* of the Israelite, but from another they *added to his obligations* of duty—illustrating the fact that increased blessings always entail increased responsibility. The Levitical institutions were as truly legal enactments as were the Ten Commandments, and willful violators of them were as much subject to punishment as those who profaned the Sabbath or committed murder: see Leviticus 7:20; 17:4, 14; Numbers 9:13.

The reason why those who transgressed the Levitical ordinances were subject to judgment, was because the ceremonial statutes were invested with the same authority as were those Commandments which pertained strictly to the moral sphere, and therefore to set them as nought was to dishonour the Divine Legislator Himself. Moreover, it was to despise the means which He had graciously appointed—the only available means—for having guilt remitted and defilement removed, and which therefore remained unforgiven, yea, aggravated, by the despite that was done to the riches of God's mercy. Therein we may perceive a clear foreshadowing of that which pertains to the Gospel, but our consideration of that must be deferred.—A.W.P.

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 hence-

forth 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."

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.

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

12. *Its Means.*

Because Truth exerts a sanctifying influence upon the soul, it necessarily follows that *error corrupts*. This is not so clearly recognised as it ought to be, or God's children would exercise more caution and care whom they heard and what they read. It is not more true that God's Word cleanses than that Satan's lies defile. False teachers are represented as "evil men and seducers" (2 Tim. 3:13), as "filthy dreamers (who) defile the flesh" (Jude 8), as "the servants of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19). Idolatry is expressed in Scripture as "whoredom" (Hosea 4:12, 13). It is a most serious thing to sit under error, for the more the mind is deceived by falsehood, the less will the awe of God be upon the heart. False doctrine has the same effect upon the soul as poison does upon the body, and unless God mercifully intervenes the result is fatal.

We feel it a bounden duty to once more sound an alarm and warn our readers against disregarding that exhortation of the Lord's. "*Take heed* what ye hear" (Mark 4:24). No matter what may be your motive, nor how well you personally be established in the Faith, it is at your peril that you disregard such a word. "Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Cor. 15:33). It is the chief aim of Satan *to* deceive, and often his agents are sent forth in the garb of orthodoxy. There is many a pulpit today which "stands for" the Divine inspiration of the Scriptures, the Deity of Christ, and salvation by grace, which is, nevertheless, retailing that which is erroneous and corrupting; yet because of its seeming orthodoxy and "fundamentalism," thousands are being deluded to their eternal undoing. It is therefore the duty of the watchmen on Zion's walls to warn the unwary.

We are Divinely commanded to "Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. 6:16). Yes, the "*old paths*" and not the new ones of the "dispensationalists." But let us be more specific. Does the insisting upon the vital necessity of practical sanctification occupy a prominent place in the preaching you hear? Is *personal holiness* emphasised as freely and frequently as Divine grace? Is your responsibility stressed as much as your inability? What effect do the sermons have upon you? Do they produce self-pity or self-loathing? Is your conscience pierced, or is there nothing more than intellectual information? My reader, you had far, far better stay at home and read God's Word and go nowhere, than sit under preaching which does not search, strip, and humble you—preaching which makes you feel your utter sinfulness and cry out for sanctifying grace.

Supplementary to our previous remarks on the believer being sanctified practically through the Word, it needs to be pointed out that he is so only as the Truth is accomplished and applied to him *by the Spirit*. The Bible is not a magical charm which mechanically produces spiritual effects. It is a Divinely provided means which has to be *used* by us, yet the blessing we derive therefrom is dependent upon the gracious operations of its Author. The One who inspired the Scriptures must open our hearts to receive them and incline our wills to respond thereto. Even the Apostles knew not the Truth so much by receiving it from the lips of Christ as by the inward illumination of the Spirit. The Lord Jesus had brought the Gospel to them from the bosom of the Father, and had taught them by an external ministry, but the Comforter was to bring it into their hearts and guide them into all Truth (John 16:13).

Looked at apart, the Scriptures instruct intellectually, but they purge not effectually; they impart a notional knowledge, but they give no experimental acquaintance with their contents; they make an impression, yet it is a weak one, that moves not the will. There is a vast difference between seeing things by the light of reason, and discerning them in the light of the Spirit: by the latter we perceive in Christ another manner of beauty than we saw before, and become conscious of the utter vanity of worldly delights in a way and degree we did not previously. Alas, the great majority of professing Christians content themselves with a superficial belief and have nothing better than human knowledge of Divine things—a natural understanding of spiritual verities—and therefore their souls are not carried out to actual holiness in the exercise of godly fear, unfeigned love, and true obedience. This brings us to consider, next, *prayer* as a means of practical sanctification.

It is by means of prayer that the soul may have access unto the Holy One, and the more we cultivate communion with Him in the secret place, the more will His realized presence exert a purifying influence upon us. God alone can impart holiness to us. Ministers may exhort unto holiness, parents may pray for their children to be made holy, husbands and wives supplicate it on behalf of each other; but none of them can *communicate* holiness to their nearest and dearest relatives. God only is the Author and Giver of holiness. To bestow holiness is a work too high for angels and too hard for humans: only a holy God can infuse holiness into the soul, and thus make the desert to bloom as the rose. God alone can melt the heart, purge the conscience, elevate the affections, move the will, and bring the life into a gracious frame and pious temper. And for this He must be earnestly *sought unto*.

It is not sufficient to search the Scriptures diligently and meditate upon them frequently, we must also beg their Author to grant us spiritual understanding and experimental acquaintance with them. “O that my ways *were directed* to keep Thy statutes! . . . *Teach me*, O LORD, the way of Thy statutes, and I will keep it unto the end . . . *Make me to go* in the path of Thy commandments . . . *Incline* my heart unto Thy testimonies” (Psa. 119:5, 33, 35, 36). “*Teach me to do* Thy will, for Thou art my God: Thy Spirit is good; *lead me* into the land of uprightness. *Quicken me*, O LORD, for Thy name’s sake” (Psa. 143:10, 11). “The Lord *direct your hearts into* the love of God” (2 Thess. 3:5). What those souls longed for was not information, but spiritual quickening, not instructions to their duty, but an effectual moving of them to the performance of the same. Ah, my reader, it is not those who have the most light in their heads who are the holiest, but those who have God’s laws most written on their hearts. It is not those who can quote Scriptures so readily and glibly who are the most pious, but those whose characters are molded and conduct regulated by the Divine precepts; and for *that* God requires to be sought unto!

Private prayer is absolutely essential unto practical sanctification. In addition to its indirect tendency to impress the soul with an awesome sense of Divine things, to deepen our reverence and esteem of God, to increase our desires for the blessings sought, and to deepen our abhorrence of the things from which we implore deliverance; prayer has for its *direct* object *the obtaining* of supplies of supernatural grace. True prayer is the approach to God of a sinful creature, conscious of deep needs, pouring out its heart before Him, applying to One who is all powerful and infinitely merciful. “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). “Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men

shall utterly fall: But they that wait upon the Lord *shall renew* their strength” (Isa. 40:30-31 cf. Luke 11:13).

But those blessings are not obtained by coldly and mechanically performing a religious duty. Real prayer is fervent, definite, persistent. It calls into exercise *all* the faculties of the soul, and all the graces of the Spirit. It is the agonized cry of one who is in deep distress. It is the pantings of a soul which longs for deliverance from its deadly foes. It is the pouring forth of holy desires which seek their realization. It is the appointed channel through which faith is chiefly to exert itself to the utmost and perform its whole work. It is essentially *heart work*. Lip labour and bodily gestures are worthless unless the heart be stirred. Only when the heart is *pained* by the wounds that sin has made, do we betake ourselves to the great Physician in reality. It is distress of soul, and not flowery language, which moves the Lord to hear His children. The greater our agonies, the more earnestly should we pray: Luke 22:44!

Yet something more than a consciousness of our wretchedness and a deep sense of need is required if we are to prevail with God. Diligent effort must be made to bring the heart into a holy frame when approaching Him. There must be a real attempt to overcome the disorder of soul which is produced by a sense of guilt and fear: Psalm 55:22. There must be a sincere endeavour to work up the heart unto a godly sorrow and a holy horror of our sins: Psalm 38:18, for this is one chief part of prayer as the lamentations show. Then pleading must be added to petitions as we learn from John 17. Further, praise and thanksgiving to God for the mercies of the new covenant is not only an obligation, but an aid to the strengthening of faith and performance of duty. Finally, fail not to present your supplications to God in the name of Christ, your Mediator and Surety, urging His infinite merits, the efficacy of His blood, and the fullness which God has placed in Him for us to draw from.

Another means to be used diligently for promoting the life of faith and the progress of practical sanctification is *self-examination*. An honest scrutiny of our state and a careful measuring of our ways by the Word is calculated to produce beneficial effects. As it is wise to take our temperature when we feel feverish, and as it is prudent for the merchant to take an inventory of his stock, so it is well for the Christian to “commune with his own heart” (Psa. 4:4) and “consider his ways” (Hag. 1:5). By so doing we are more apt to discover *what it is* which most needs remedying, what it is we have most cause to bewail before God, and what it is we have particular occasion to thank Him for. If self-examination be properly conducted it will produce humbling, evoke prayer, and stimulate effort to increased diligence.

In prosecuting this examination you must be willing to know the worst of yourself as well as the best, and the best as well as the worst. It is quite consistent with humility to take notice of the workings of grace: if we do not, how shall we own and give thanks for the fruit of the Spirit? But remember that inherent grace is not to be tried by its degree, but by its nature—are there *any* sparks of grace amid an ocean of corruption, *any* lustings of the spirit against the flesh? You must not deny yourself to be a babe in Christ because you find the old man is so much bigger than the new. The more the Christian perceives his defects in holiness, the more should he labour after holiness: “I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto Thy testimonies. I made haste, and delayed not to keep Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:59, 60).

The actual *exercise of indwelling grace* is another help to the increase of practical sanctification. If I am to attain unto higher degrees of holiness, then I must set in motion and act out that holiness which I already have. Inactive limbs become stiff and useless; clothes laid up are devoured by moths; silver and gold that is hoarded will tarnish; and the non-exercise of holiness brings upon the soul a decay of holiness. Wells are the sweeter for the drawing, and holiness is healthiest when called into action. It was for this reason that Paul called upon Timothy to “*stir up* the gift of God which is in thee” (2 Tim. 1:6). There is an allusion in those words to the sacred fire in the temple, which was always to be kept burning. Just as fire is reserved by blowing, so holiness is maintained by being steadily stirred up in the soul.

It is sad to find some of the Lord’s people paralyzed by a sense of their corruptions. Instead of bemoaning their lack of holiness, they need to use that holiness which they already possess. The yachtsman does not refuse to unfurl his sails because only a very little breeze is blowing, but is thankful that there is not a dead calm—no wind at all. As the frequent actings of sin is the strengthening of sin, so the frequent actings of holiness is the strengthening of the same. Holiness thrives, increases, advances, by its actings. “Take heed therefore how ye hear: for whosoever *hath*, to him *shall be given*; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have” (Luke 8:18)—“hath” it in reality, making manifest the grace imparted to him, as faith proves itself by its works.

The dispensations of Providence are another great means for accomplishing our practical sanctification. This is an important branch of the subject which has received scant attention from most of those who have written thereon—much to the loss of the saints’ comfort, for herein is to be found the key which opens to us much that is so mysterious and trying in our lives. In the government of this world and in the regulation of the affairs of His people, God has in view *their sanctification*. “Many are the afflictions of the righteous” (Psa. 34:19): but why should they be? “We must through much tribulation enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22); but wherein lies the needs be for it? “All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12) but why should they? The answer is, that their personal holiness may be promoted! Ah, my reader, how else the explanation of those crosses and curses, those trials and troubles: God has in view *the refreshing* of your soul, and therefore may you say with Job, “When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold” (23:10).

“And we know 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). Though to outward sight many things appear to be working *against* your good, though to carnal reason much seems to be accomplishing your ill, yet, in reality, it is far otherwise. As it is the harmonization of different voices which issues in the lovely melody of a choir, as it is the combination of various ingredients which produces the health-restoring medicine, so it is the working together of diverse elements which contributes to the blessing of the believer. The various factors which enter into his life not only operate, but co-operate acting in perfect concert. There is such a Divine regulation of them that they are made to promote our spiritual interests. How wondrous the wisdom and the power of Him who renders subservient to His gracious designs things which have a tendency to evil, which *are* so in themselves, and which would *be so* to us, did not God ordain otherwise.

How we should marvel at this! What a frightful amount of evil is in continual activity in this world! What an incalculable number of opposing self-interests are at work! What a vast army of rebels daily fighting against God! What hosts of super-human creatures are opposing the Lord and seeking to destroy His people! Yet high above all is the Almighty, in undisturbed calm, complete Master of the situation, having such perfect control that none may touch a hair of our heads without His permission. But more: they are made *to serve our interests* and contribute to our good. The Divine Alchemist brings good out of evil, making the power and malice of Satan tributary to His beneficent purpose. It is because of this that “*we know* that all things work together for good.” Yes, *all* the complicated occurrences of our lives, with their disappointments and sorrows, are forwarding our practical sanctification.

That afflictions *are* one of the means which God uses for the cleansing of His people is clear from Scriptures, where they are called His “furnace” and refining pot (Isa. 48:10). “He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap. And He shall sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver, and He shall *purify* the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the LORD an offering in righteousness” (Mal. 3:2, 3). First, by means of affliction we obtain *fresh views of the vileness of sin*. Though the Divine chastenings proceed from the Father's love, yet they have in them some tokens of His displeasure against sin, for “correction” always respects *faults*. If we are duly “exercised” by them (Heb. 12:11), then we are reminded anew of our ill-deserts and should loathe ourselves and be ashamed. And *that* is the first step toward our purifying; as self-pleasing is the worst element in our pollution, so when we abhor ourselves for it we are at least near unto the remedy.

Second, afflictions *wean us from material comforts*. So prone are our hearts unto idolatry that the affections are allured by the very creatures of God, which are good in themselves, but are turned into evils when we cleave unto them inordinately. Yes, we are often guilty of abusing God's blessings, perverting His mercies, and giving to the creature that to which the Creator alone is entitled. Then it is that God blows upon the “goodliness” of the flesh, makes to wither those flowers of this world on which we set so much store, and discovers to us their emptiness and insufficiency to give relief. When health is shattered, loved ones snatched away or the soul bowed down by a sense of the foulness and gravity of our sins, what are the pleasures, honours and riches of the world worth then? Alas, that suffering and sorrow are necessary to expose to us their vanity.

Third, afflictions *curb the vigour of our lusts*. There is nothing like grief of heart and pain of body to take off the edge of those affections whereby the lusts of the mind and the flesh bring about all our defilements. A wounded spirit or diseased body effectually curbs those affections which are ever ready to be pressed into the service of our lusts, and which often carry the soul into the pursuits of sin as the horse rushes into battle—with reckless abandon and fury. It is into these fond dotings that concupiscence empties itself and overflows into numberless evils. But by affliction God renders those affections un-serviceable unto our corruptions, and thereby prepares the soul to become a partaker of His holiness.

Fourth, by afflictions *our graces are drawn forth*. The soul being no longer able to support or relieve itself, turns unto God for succour and comfort. It is then that faith, hope, patience, love, meekness, are called into exercise. “We glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience,

hope” (Rom. 5:3, 4). “Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept Thy Word” (Psa. 119:67). Some medicines are not only most unpalatable, but they cause much pain; yet their ultimate effect is beneficial. So under afflictions God designs the health of His people. Yet let it be pointed out that their efficacy arises not from their own fitness to that end, but from the gracious operation of the Spirit *blessing them to us*—apart from *that*, they occasion either rebellion or abject despair. How we need, then, to pray to the Spirit to sanctify them to us. It is only as we are duly “exercised thereby” that they yield the “peaceable fruits of righteousness”—A.W.P.

“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.