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The Spirit Preserving.

During recent years much has been written upon the eternal security of the saints, some of it helpful, but most of it superficial and injurious. Many Scriptures have been quoted, but few of them explained. A great deal has been said about the *fact* of Divine preservation, but comparatively little on the *method* thereof. The preservation of the believer by the Father and by the Son has been given considerable prominence, but the work of the Spirit therein was largely ignored. The general impression conveyed to the thoughtful reader has been that, the “final perseverance” of the Christian is a mechanical thing rather than a spiritual process, that it is accomplished by physical force rather than by moral suasion, that it is performed by external might rather than by internal means—something like an unconscious non-swimmer being rescued from a watery grave, or a fireman carrying a swooning person out of a burning building. Such illustrations are radically faulty, utterly misleading, and pernicious in their tendency.

It may be objected that the principal thing for us to be concerned with is the blessed fact itself, and that there is no need for us to trouble ourselves about the *modus operandi*: let us rejoice in the truth that God *does* preserve His people, and not wrack our brains over *how* He does so. As well might the objector say the same about the redemptive work of Christ: let us be thankful that He did make an atonement, and not worry ourselves over the philosophy of it. But is it of no real importance, no value to the soul, to ascertain that Christ’s atonement was a *vicarious* one, that it was a *definite* one, and not offered at random; that it is a *triumphant* one, securing the actual justification of all for whom it was made? Why, my reader, it is at this very point lies the dividing-line between vital truth and fundamental error. God has done something more than record in the Gospels the historical fact of Christ’s death: He has supplied in the Epistles an explanation of its nature and design.

So, too, God has given us far more than bald statements in His Word that none of His people shall perish: He has also revealed *how* He preserves them from destruction, and it is not only highly insulting to Him, but to our own great loss, if we ignore or refuse to ponder carefully what He has made known therein. Was it without reason Paul prayed, “That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him: the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; *that ye may know . . . what is* the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand” (Eph. 1:17-20). Christians are “kept by the power of God” (1 Peter 1:5), and evidently we can only know what that power is, and the greatness thereof, as we are spiritually enlightened concerning the same.

When we read that we are “kept by the power of *God* through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:5), or “For it is *God* which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13), in such passages the immediate reference is always to *the Holy Spirit*—the “immediate,” though not the exclusive. In the economy of redemption all is from the Father, through the Son, by the Spirit. All proceeds from the foreordination of the Father, all that comes to the believer is through Christ, that is, on account of His infinite merits: all is actually wrought by the Spirit, for

He is the Executive of the Godhead, the active Agent in all the works of redemption. The believer is as truly and directly *preserved by the Spirit*, as he was quickened by Him; and only as this is duly recognised by us will we be inclined to render Him that thanks and praise which is His distinctive due.

The chief end for which God sends the Spirit to indwell His people is to deliver them from apostasy: to preserve them not only from the everlasting burnings, but from those things which would expose them thereto. Unless that be clearly stated, we justly lay ourselves open to the charge that this is a *dangerous* doctrine—making light of sin and encouraging careless living. It is not true that, if a man has once truly believed in Christ, no matter what enormities he may commit afterwards, nor what course of evil he follow, he cannot fail to reach Heaven. Not so is the teaching of Holy Writ. The Spirit does not preserve in a way of licentiousness, but only in the way of holiness. Nowhere has God promised His favour to dogs who go back to their vomit, nor to swine which return to their wallowing in the mire. The believer may indeed experience a fearful fall, yet he will not lie down content in his filth, any more than David did: “Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with His hand” (Psa. 37:24).

That many Christians *have* persevered in holiness to the last moment of their lives, cannot be truthfully denied. Now their perseverance must have been obtained wholly of themselves, or partly of themselves and partly by Divine aid, or it must have been wholly dependent on the purpose and power of God. None who profess to believe the Scriptures would affirm that it was due entirely to their own efforts and faithfulness, for they clearly teach that progress in holiness is as much the work of the Spirit as is the new birth itself. To say that the perseverance of the saint is due, in part to himself, is to divide the credit, afford ground for boasting, and robs God of half His rightful glory. To declare that a life of faith and holiness is entirely dependent upon the grace and power of God, is but to repeat what the Lord told His disciples: “without Me ye can do *nothing*” (John 15:5), and is to affirm with the Apostle “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency *is of God*” (2 Cor. 3:5).

Yet it needs to be pointed out that in maintaining His people in holiness, the power of God operates in quite another manner than it does in the maintenance of a river or the preservation of a tree. A river may (sometimes *does*) dry up, and a tree may be uprooted: the one is maintained by being replenished by fresh waters, the other is preserved by its being nourished and by its roots being held in the ground; but in each case, the preservation is by physical power, from without, entirely without their concurrence. In the case of the Christian’s preservation it is quite otherwise. With him, God works from within, using moral suasion, leading him to a *concurrence* of mind and will with the Holy Spirit in this work. God deals with the believer as a moral agent, draws him “with cords of a man” (Hosea 11:4), maintains his responsibility, and bids him “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure” (Phil. 2:12, 13).

Thus there is both preservation on God’s part and perseverance in holiness on ours, and the former is accomplished by maintaining the latter. God does not deal with His people as though they were machines, but as rational creatures. He sets before them weighty considerations and powerful motives, solemn warnings and rich rewards, and by the renewings of His grace and the revivings of His Spirit causes them *to respond* thereto. Are they made conscious of the power and pollution of indwelling sin? then they cry for

help to resist its lustings and to escape its defilements. Are they shown the importance, the value, and the need of faith? then they beg the Lord for an increase of it. Are they made sensible of that obedience which is due unto God, but aware too of the hindering drag of the flesh? then they cry "Draw me, we will run after Thee." Do they yearn to be fruitful? then they pray "Awake, O north wind; and come, thou south; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Let my Beloved come into His garden, and eat His pleasant fruits" (Song. 4:16).

His understanding having been savingly enlightened, the believer desires to grow in grace and the knowledge of his Lord, that he may abound in spiritual wisdom and good works. Every affection of his heart is stirred, every faculty of his soul called into action. And yet this concurrence is not such as to warrant us saying that his perseverance depends, in any degree on himself, for every spiritual stirring and act on his part is but the effect of the Spirit's operation within him, "He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it" (Phil. 1:6). He who first enlightened, will continue to shine upon the understanding; He who originally convicted of sin, will go on searching the conscience; He who imparted faith will nourish and sustain the same; He who drew to Christ, will continue to attract the affections toward Him.—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews.

111. *Motives to Fidelity: 13:7, 8.*

In seeking to ascertain the meaning and scope of the verses which now require our consideration, due notice must be taken of their setting, and that, in turn, weighed in the light of the Epistle as a whole. In the immediate context the Apostle dehorts from covetousness and discontent, reminding his readers that God had said "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." From that Divine promise he points out two conclusions which faith will draw. First, "The Lord is my Helper." The child of God is in urgent need of an all-powerful Helper, for he has to contend with a mighty foe whose range knows no bounds. It is a great mercy when we are made conscious of our helplessness, when our conceit is so subdued as to realize that without Divine assistance defeat is certain. What peace and comfort it brings to the heart when the believer is enabled to realize that the Lord is just as truly his "Helper" when chastening him, as when delivering from trouble!

The second inference which faith makes from the Divine promise is, "I will not fear what man shall do unto me." If the Lord will never leave nor forsake me, then He must be "a very *present help* in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). O what a difference it makes to the sorely-tried soul when he can realize that God is not far away from him, but "at hand" (Phil. 4:5). Yes, even if called upon to walk through the valley of the shadow of death, he will be *with me*, and therefore will His rod and staff comfort me (Psa. 23:4). And since the believer's Helper is none other than the Almighty, no real harm or evil can possibly befall him. Why, then, should he dread the creature? His worst enemy can do naught against him without the Lord's permission. The abiding presence of the Lord ensures the supply of every real need: therefore contentment should fill the heart. The abiding presence of the Lord guarantees all-sufficient help and therefore alarm at man's enemies should be removed.

Even in the more general exhortations of Hebrews 13 there is a tacit recognition of the peculiar circumstances of the Hebrews, and more plainly still is this implied in the language of verse 6. The Jewish Christians were being opposed and persecuted by their unbelieving brethren, and the temptation to apostatise was very real and pressing. "The fear of man bringeth a snare" (Prov. 29:25). It did to Abraham, when he went down to Egypt, and later on to Gerar, moving him to conceal Sarah's real relation to him. It did to the whole nation of Israel when they hearkened to the report of the ten spies. It did to Peter, so much so that he denied his Master. It did to Pilate, for when the Jews threatened him with "If thou let this man go, thou art not Caesar's friend" (John 19:12), he unwillingly consented to Christ's crucifixion. Fearfully solemn is that word, "But whosoever shall deny Me before men, him will I also deny before My Father which is in Heaven" (Matt. 10:33).

Now it is view of the trying situation in which the Hebrew saints were placed that we should consider our present passage. The Apostle's design was to fortify them against temptations to apostatise, to encourage them unto steadfastness in the Faith, to *so* establish them that even though they should be called on to suffer a violent death, they would yet remain loyal to Christ. Moreover, their enemies were not only intimidating them by open oppression and threats of more dire persecution, but others under the guise of being Christian teachers, were seeking to poison their minds with errors that undermined the very foundation of the Gospel: it was to them that Paul had reference in verse 9. Hence in

verses 7 and 8 the Apostle also calls upon the Hebrews to maintain their profession of the Truth in opposition to the lies of these Judaisers.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:7, 8). A number of questions are raised by the terms of our passage. Who are the rulers here mentioned? In what sense or way are they to be “remembered.” What is signified by “following” their faith? What is denoted by the “end of their conversation”? Wherein do these exhortations furnish motives unto fidelity or steadfastness? Why affirm here the Saviour’s immutability?

First of all it should be pointed out that the A.V. rendering of the opening clause is misleading and quite out of harmony with the remainder of the verse. “Those which have the rule over you” is a single word in the Greek. It is a participle of the present tense, but is frequently used as a noun, as is obviously the case here: “your rulers.” That their *present* rulers could *not* be intended is quite apparent from several considerations. First, because the Hebrews were called upon to “remember,” rather than submit to them. Second, because they are distinctly described as they “who *have* spoken unto you the Word of God.” Third, because they were such as had already received “the *end* of their conversation” or conduct in this world. Finally, because there is a distinct precept given with respect to their attitude toward their living rulers in verse 17.

The reference is, of course, to the spiritual rulers, those who had ministered to them God’s Word. The persons intended were the officers in the Church, that is, those who guided and governed its affairs. “Overseers” or “guides” is hardly definite or strong enough to bring out the force of the original term, for while it signifies to lead or go before, it also denotes one who is over others, being the word for “governor” in Matthew 2:6 and Acts 7:10. “Your leaders” would be better, though hardly as good as the word actually used in the A.V.—your *rulers*. Those in view were the Apostles and prophets, the elders and pastors, who instructed the saints and directed the government of the churches. No doubt the Apostle was more specifically alluding to such men as Stephen, and James who had been beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:2), men who had sealed the Truth they proclaimed by laying down their lives for it.

“Who have spoken unto you the Word of God”: *that* is the mark by which Christian leaders are to be identified—the men whom God has graciously called to ecclesiastical rule are gifted by Him to expound and enforce the Scriptures, for the function of their office is not legislative, but administrative. The Christian leader, though he possesses no arbitrary power, nevertheless is to bear rule, and that, according to Scriptures. He is not called upon to invent new laws, but simply to declare the will and apply the statutes of Zion’s King. There cannot be a properly ordered household unless *discipline* be duly maintained. Alas, if one section of those who profess to be the ministers of Christ have usurped His prerogatives, exalting themselves into ecclesiastical despots, another class have woefully failed to maintain the honour of His House, letting down the bars and inaugurating a regime of lawlessness.

“Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the Word of God.” By this criterion are we to *test* the ostensible “guides” and religious leaders of the day. “Beloved, believe not every spirit, but *try* the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1); and never was there a time when we more urgently needed to measure men by this standard. “Now I be-

seech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them” (Rom. 16:17). “If there come any unto you, and bring not *this doctrine*, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed” (2 John 1:10)—no matter how pleasing his personality, soothing his message, or numerous his followers. “For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God” (John 3:34): true of Christ perfectly, but characteristic of all whom He calls to the sacred office of the ministry. To speak God’s Word is the grand duty of the Christian teacher—not to indulge in philosophical or theological speculation, nor to tickle the ears of men with sensational topics of the day.

The next thing singled out for mention in connection with these spiritual rulers who had preached the Word of God, is their “*faith*,” which the Hebrews were enjoined to “follow.” There is some difference of opinion among the commentators as to exactly what is here referred to. “Faith” is a term which has a varying scope in its New Testament usage, though its different meanings are closely applied, and can usually be determined by the context. First, “Faith” is the principle of *trust* whereby the heart turns to God and rests upon His word, and by which we are, instrumentally, saved: “thy faith hath made thee whole” (Matt. 9:22), “by grace are ye saved through faith” (Eph. 2:8). Second, “faith” has reference to that which is *to be believed*, the Truth of God, the Christian Creed; “exhorting them to continue in the Faith” (Acts 14:22), “The Word of Faith which we preach” (Rom. 10:8), “contend for the Faith” (Jude 3). Third, “faith” is used to designate the *fruits and works* that spring from it, because it is their root: “brought us good tidings of your faith” (1 Thess. 3:6), “show me thy faith” (James 2:18), i.e., the effects of it.

The term “faith” is used in still another sense. Fourth, it signifies *fidelity* or faithfulness, as in the following passages; “The weightier matters of the Law, judgment, mercy, and faith” (Matt. 23:23), “the faith of God” (Rom. 3:3), “the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace . . . faith” or “faithfulness” as in the R.V. (Gal. 5:22). Personally we consider this last meaning of the term to be the primary, though not exclusive, significance in our present verse. The reference is not only to the grace of faith which was in them, but to its whole exercise in all that they did and suffered. Amid much discouragement and bitter opposition those Christian leaders had not fainted, but held on their way. Despite temptations to apostatise they had persevered in their profession, remained loyal to Christ, continued to minister unto His people, and had glorified God by laying down their lives for the Gospel. Faithful to their Master, they were fruitful in His service to the end of their course.

The last thing here mentioned of these spiritual rulers is “the end of their conversation,” which is the most difficult to define with exactitude. The Greek word here for “end” is not “telos” which signifies the finish or conclusion of a thing, but “ekbasis” which literally means “a going up out of.” It is found elsewhere in the New Testament only in 1 Corinthians 10:13, where it is rendered “God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make *a way to escape*, that ye may be able to bear it.” “It is not therefore merely an end that is intended; nor doth the word signify a common end, issue or event of things, but an end accompanied with a deliverance from, and so a conquest over, such difficulties and dangers as men were before exposed unto. These persons, in the whole course of their conversation, were exercised with difficulties, dangers and sufferings, all attempting to stop them in their way, or to turn them out of it. But what did it all amount to, what was the issue of

their conflict? It was a blessed deliverance from all troubles, and conquest over them” (John Owen).

“The end of there conversation,” then, as reference to their egress or exit from this world of sin and sorrow. It was a deliverance from all their trials, an honourable way of escape from all their difficulties and dangers, an exodus from the land of their Enemy. Yet it seems to us that the particular term used here by the Spirit is designed to carry our thoughts beyond this present scene. What was before the mind of Paul himself as he announces that the time of his departure was at hand? First, he declared, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith,” and then he added “henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Tim. 4:7, 8). As we have said, “ekbasis” signified “a going up out of”: thus the “end of their conversation” also meant a being taken to be forever with the Lord, a sure though future resurrection, and an unfading diadem of glory.

Corresponding to the three things said of their spiritual leaders, a threefold exhortation is given to the Hebrews. They were required to “remember” those who had spoken to them the Word of God, they were bidden to “follow” their faith, and they were enjoined to “consider” the end of their conversation. “Remember” is another word that is given a comprehensive meaning and scope in its Scriptural usage. It signifies that *reverence and submission* which is due a superior, as in “Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth” (Eccl. 12:1). It implies the *holding fast* of what has been received, whether instruction, promises, or warnings: “Remember, and forget not, how thou provokedst the LORD thy God to wrath in the wilderness” (Deut. 9:7). It means *to recall* that which has been forgotten: “When therefore He was risen from the dead, His disciples remembered that He had said this unto them; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had said” (John 2:22). It denotes *to meditate upon*, as in “And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness” (Deut. 8:2).

Here in our text the “remember” is used comprehensively, as comprising all those duties of respect and esteem, of love and obedience, which they owed to their departed teachers. Nor was such an exhortation needless. Human nature is very fickle, and tragic it is to mark how quickly many a faithful pastor is forgotten. Such forgetfulness is a species of ingratitude, and therefore is sinful. “Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man” (Eccl. 9:15)—God taxes them with their forgetfulness! “Remember your leaders” includes thankfulness to God for them, speaking well of them, putting into practice their teaching. More specifically it means: treasure up in heart their instructions; call to mind their counsels, warnings, exhortations: gratefully meditate upon their untiring efforts to establish you in the Faith.

“Remember your rulers.” How fearfully has this precept been perverted! What terrible superstitions have been invented and perpetrated in this connection: such as religious celebrations on the anniversary of their death, the dedication of “altars” and “chapels” unto their memory, the adoration of their bones, with the ascription of miraculous cures to them; the offering of prayers for them and to them. True, they are to be esteemed very highly in love for their works’ sake (1 Thess. 5:13), both while they are with us and after God has removed them from us, but His servants are not to be “remembered” with idolatrous veneration nor to the dividing with Christ any of those honours which belong alone

unto Him. Not carnally, but spiritually are they to be remembered in what they did and taught, so that we are duly affected thereby.

It is at the point last mentioned we may perceive the pertinency of this precept to the Apostle's design. His immediate purpose was to fortify them against departure from the Faith. Hence, he bids them "remember your rulers," for if you bear steadily in mind *their* instruction, you will at once perceive the error of the "divers and strange doctrines" which he warns against in verse 9. "The sheep follow Him: for they know His voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers" (John 10:4, 5): *that* is the order—if we are heeding the true servants of Christ, we shall neither be attracted nor deceived by the emissaries of Satan. Again; a loving esteem of our teachers and a grateful remembrance of their devoted and laborious efforts to get us established in the Truth, will make us ashamed to go back on their instruction. Finally; to recall their steadfastness will be an encouragement to us when encountering opposition: *they* did not apostatise in the face of extreme peril—shall *we* spurn the example they left us?

And what is the clear implication of this to present-day preachers? Is there not here a searching word for heart and conscience? Is *your* ministry worthy to be stored up in the hearers minds? Are your sermons worth remembering? The humble-minded will be ready to answer No, there is little or nothing in my simple and homely discourses deserving to be treasured up. Ah, brother preacher, it is not clever analyses of difficult passages which exhibit your mental acumen, nor lofty flights of language which display your rhetorical powers, that is of lasting worth! Rather is it that which makes sin to be more hated, God to be more feared, Christ to be more highly valued, the path of duty more clearly defined, which is what we are to aim at.

"Whose faith follow." This is the next duty we owe unto our spiritual leaders. It is closely allied to the former: we are to so "remember" them as to be effectually influenced in our own conduct. The word for "follow" signifies to imitate: it is used again in "For yourselves know how ye ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2 Thess. 3:7). "It is such a following as wherein we are fully conformed unto, and do lively express, that which we are said to follow. So a scholar may be said to follow his master, when, having attained all his arts and sciences, he acts them in the same manner as his master did. So are we to follow the faith of these guides" (John Owen). This is the greatest honour which we can do them, and is far more pleasing to God than erecting a marble monument to their memory or dedicating some "church" unto their name.

"Whose faith *follow*." There are many who sit more or less regularly under the ministry of God's servants, and they approve of their doctrine, admire their courage, speak well of them, but *they do not* carry out their principles or emulate their example. The whole force of this second exhortation is that we are to so "remember" our leaders as to be thereby influenced unto the living of a holy life. To "follow" their faith means to ponder their trust in God and pray for an increase of your own. Recall to mind their instructions, and continue thou in the profession and practice of the doctrine they inculcated. Meditate upon their lives, and so far as their works corresponded to their words, imitate their conduct. Copy their virtues, and not their eccentricities. "No mere man, not the best of men, is to be our pattern or example absolutely, or in all things. This honour is due

unto Christ alone. But they may be so, we ought to make them so, with respect unto their graces and duties” (John Owen).

“Whose faith follow.” The *appropriateness* of this exhortation to the situation in which the Hebrews were is also obvious. It is a spiritual stimulus rightly to “remember” our former leaders, for it makes them, in a sense, present again with us. The faculty to recall the past is not only a Divine gift and mercy, but it entails definite responsibilities. As we recall the testimony and toil of our ministers, their loyalty to Christ and devotedness to our interests, we are to be suitably affected thereby. When encountering opposition, we should remember the much fiercer persecution others have suffered before us. When tempted to compromise and sell the Truth, we should think upon the unswerving fidelity of our fathers in the Faith. Should we ever be under heavy pressure to apostatise, we must weigh the fact that the principles of the faith of our former leaders were adequate to sustain *their* hearts, so that they met death with holy composure, and seek grace to “hold the beginning of *our* confidence steadfast unto the end.”

Once more we would pause and notice the solemn implication of this word to those of us who are ministers of the Gospel. Next to pleasing the Lord Himself, our chief care should be to set before our flock such an example of faith and holiness, as that it will be their duty to remember and follow. This is not optional, but obligatory, for God has bidden each of His servants “be thou *an example* of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity” (1 Tim. 4:12); and again, “In all things showing thyself a *pattern* of good works: in doctrine showing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you” (Titus 2:7, 8). Alas, how many of the present-day preachers set an example which if followed by their hearers would lead them to perdition. O for grace to let our light “so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in Heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

“Considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7). Here is the third part of our duty toward those whom God has placed in spiritual authority over us. It signifies to observe diligently and thoroughly, so as to have the heart suitably affected thereby. The word for “considering” occurs again only in Acts 17:23, namely, when Paul “beheld” the gods that the Athenians worshipped, so that “his spirit was stirred in him” (v. 16)! Literally, the term signifies “looking up to.” The Hebrews were to recall the “conversation” of their deceased teachers, their manner of life, which was one of testimony and toil, fidelity to Christ and love for the souls of His people: a “conversation” of devoted service in the face of many discouragements and much opposition, sustained by trust in the living God; and the Hebrews were to ponder and take courage and comfort from the blessed end or issue of the same.

Thus the three parts of this exhortation are intimately related. The leaders were to be “remembered” in such a manner as to be effectually influenced by the example they had left; they were to be “followed” because their fidelity was Divinely rewarded with a victorious exit from this world. In the last clause the Apostle presented a powerful motive to stir up the saints to the discharge of the duty previously described. Consider their “end” that *yours* may morally resemble it; you must adhere to their doctrine and imitate their practice if you are to receive the victor’s crown. “Consider what it (their ‘end’) came to: their faith failed not, their hope did not perish, they were not disappointed, but had a blessed end of their walk and course” (John Owen). Sometimes God permits His servants

today to bear witness to the sufficiency of the principles of the Gospel to support and comfort on a deathbed.

“Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and forever” (Heb. 13:8). We will not now attempt to sermonize upon this well-known and precious verse, but rather give a brief exposition of it. The first thing to ponder is the particular book in which this declaration is made, for that throws light on its scope and meaning. Hebrews is the Epistle which treats specifically and at length with the great alteration made by God in His dealings with the Church on earth, the revolution which was introduced by the substituting of the new covenant for the old, the passing away of Judaism and the inauguration of Christianity. This had involved many changes of a radical character, a great “shaking” and “removing” (12:27) of “that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away” (8:13). It is in view of *that* our present verse is to be interpreted and enjoyed. The Temple is destroyed, the ceremonial law is gone, the Levitical priesthood is no more; but Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, the Mediator between God and His people, *abides unchanged*.—A.W.P.

The Life of David.

63. *His Crossing Kidron.*

The second half of 2 Samuel 15 displays a striking blending of lights and shadows: in David's darkest hour we not only see the shining forth of some of his own loveliest virtues, but we also behold his friends and followers at their best. It is the way of our gracious God to temper our severest crosses by mingling comforts with them. David's favourite son and his chief counselor had both turned traitors against him, but the loyalty of part of his army, the faithfulness of the Levites, the sympathy expressed by those of the common people who witnessed his distress, afforded some real consolation to his stricken heart. In times of deep distress and seasons of sore despondency we are very apt to imagine that our enemies are more numerous than is actually the case, and that we have fewer friends than is really so; but David was now to discover that a goodly number were prepared to cleave to him at all costs.

It is not so much from the natural (though even here there is much that is praiseworthy) as the spiritual viewpoint that our passage needs to be pondered. The key to it lies in the state of David's heart at this time. He is to be viewed as *the penitent soul*, as one who realised that in justice he was being afflicted. He knew that his sin had found him out, that he was being lovingly yet righteously chastised for the same. He was filled with godly sorrow and mourned before Him whose Name had been so dishonoured by him. He humbly bows to God's rod and submissively receives its stroke. In this spirit he would be *alone* in his trouble, for he alone had sinned and provoked Jehovah: therefore does he counsel the Gittites to leave him. In the same lowly spirit he sends the ark—the symbol of Jehovah's manifested presence—back to Jerusalem: it was his chief joy, and *that* he felt he was not now entitled to taste.

But we will not generalize any further upon our passage, but consider its details. "Then said the king to Ittai the Gittite, Wherefore goest thou also with us? return to thy place, and abide with the king [Absalom, who now usurped the throne]: for thou art a stranger, and also an exile. Whereas thou camest but yesterday, should I this day make thee go up and down with us? seeing I go whither I may, return thou, and take back thy brethren: mercy and truth be with thee" (2 Sam. 15:19, 20). What a lovely spirit did the king here evidence; in the midst of his own deep trouble, his thought and concern was for those about him, desiring them to escape the hardships and peril which now lay before him. What a gracious example for us to heed in this selfish age—that even in our sorest trials we must not impose upon those who are kind to us and load them with our troubles. "For every man shall bear his own burden" (Gal. 6:5).

It would appear that Ittai was the leader of the six hundred Gittites (v. 18). They had thrown in their lot with David while he sojourned in Gath of the Philistines, and followed him when he returned to the land of Israel: either because they believed that Philistia was doomed or, more likely, because they were attracted by David himself. They were now among the king's most faithful attendants, having accompanied him as he fled the royal city. They would be a most useful bodyguard for him at this time, but in his noble generosity and tender compassion David desired to spare them the inconvenience and dangers which were now his portion. How this makes us think of David's Son and Lord, who, probably, at this identical place said to those who had come to arrest Him, "If therefore ye seek Me, let these go their way" (John 18:8). The *Antitype* should ever be in mind as we read the Old Testament Scriptures.

“And Ittai answered the king, and said, As the LORD liveth, and as my lord the king liveth, surely in what place my lord the king shall be, whether in death or life, even there also will thy servant be” (2 Sam. 15:21). David desired to dismiss them, but their attachment to him and his cause was much stronger than that of many of the Israelites. Most blessed and striking is this, for David had nothing to offer them now save fellowship with him in his rejection and sufferings; yet they valued his companionship so highly that they refused to leave their stricken leader. Spiritually, that love of the brethren which is the fruit of the Spirit of Christ, when it is healthy and vigorous, will not be deterred through fears of hardship or danger, but will stand by and render assistance to those in affliction. Antitypically, this verse teaches us that we should cleave faithfully to Christ no matter how low His cause in the world may be.

“And David said to Ittai, Go and pass over. And Ittai the Gittite passed over, and all his men, and all the little ones that were with him” (v. 22). Such devotion as had been displayed by these loyal followers must have touched the king’s heart, the more so as it proceeded from those who were of a heathen stock. From Ittai’s words “as the Lord liveth” (v. 21), it would seem that they were influenced by David’s religion as well as his person; and assuredly he would *not* have kept them so near him, or have said “mercy and truth be with thee” (v. 20), unless they had definitely renounced all idolatry. There is a seeming ambiguity in his words here “go and pass over,” yet this disappears in the light of the next verse: it was the Kidron they crossed—thus they were given the place of chief honour, taking the lead and heading David’s present company!

“And all the country wept with a loud voice, and all the people passed over” (v. 23). Though the multitude favoured Absalom, yet there were many who sympathised with David. It must indeed have been a hard heart which remained unmoved by such an affecting sight: the aged king forsaking his palace—with but a small retinue—fleeing from his own son—now seeking shelter in the wilderness! They had been less than human if they grieved not for poor David. And let it be duly noted that the Spirit has *recorded* their weeping, for God is not unmindful of genuine tears, either of personal repentance or pity for others. This mention of their weeping plainly teaches that *we* should feel deeply for those parents who are abused or ruined by their children.

“The king also himself passed over the brook Kidron, and all the people passed over, toward the way of the wilderness” (v. 23). This manifestly foreshadowed one of the most bitter episodes in our Lord’s passion. Not only is this same brook actually mentioned in John 18:1—the slight difference in spelling being due to the change from the Hebrew to Greek—but there are too many points of analogy between David’s and Christ’s crossing of it to miss the merging of the type into the antitype. But before tracing these striking resemblances, let us—as its solemn historical interest requires—make a few remarks upon the brook itself.

Significantly enough “Kidron,” or to use the more familiar spelling of John 18:1 “Cedron,” signifies “black.” It was aptly named, for it was a dark rivulet which ran through the gloomy valley of Moriah, which Josephus tells us was on the east side of Jerusalem. It lay between the bases of the temple hill and the mount of Olivet. Into this brook was continually emptied the sewage of the city, as well as the filth from the temple sacrifices for sin. This was the “unclean place without the city” (Lev. 14:40, 41), where the excrements of the offering were deposited and carried away by the waters of this

brook. In a figure it was the sins and iniquities of the people which were being washed away from before God's face—from the temple, where He dwelt in Israel's midst.

It is interesting to note there are other references to "Kidron" in the Old Testament, and what is recorded in connection therewith is in striking and solemn harmony with what we have just pointed out above. This brook not only (later) received the filth of the city and the refuse from the temple, but into its foul waters the godly kings of Judah cast the ashes of the idols they had destroyed: see 2 Chronicles 15:16; 30:14; 2 Kings 23:4, 6. Over this unclean brook our blessed Saviour passed on His dolorous way to Gethsemane, where His holy soul loathed our iniquities put into His "cup," represented by this filthy and nasty Cedron. That foul brook served as a suitable reminder of the deep mire (Psa. 69:2) into which Christ was about to sink. Nothing could be more repulsive and nauseating than the soil and waters of this brook, and nothing could be more loathsome to the Holy One than to be encompassed with all the guilt and filth of sin belonging to His people.

But let us now consider the points of resemblance between the type and antitype. First, it was at this brook the humiliating flight of David began, and the crossing of the same marked the commencement of the Saviour's "Passion" (John 18:1). Second, it was as the despised and rejected king that David now went forth, and so it was with the Redeemer as He journeyed to Gethsemane. Third, yet David was not entirely alone: a little company of devoted followers still clung to him; thus it was with the Antitype. Fourth, Ahithophel, his familiar friend, had now joined forces with his enemies: in like manner, Judas had gone forth to betray Christ to His foes. Fifth, though the multitude favoured Absalom, some of the common people sympathized with and "wept" for David; so, while the general cry against the Lord Jesus was "crucify Him," nevertheless, there were those who wept and bewailed Him (Luke 23:27).

"And lo Zadok also, and all the Levites were with him, bearing the ark of the covenant of God: and they set down the ark of God; and Abiathar went up, until all the people had done passing out of the city" (2 Sam. 15:24). This spoke well of David, that even the Levites, and the high priest himself, were prepared to throw in their lot with him in the day of his rejection. Notwithstanding his sad failures, the ministers of the tabernacle knew full well the affection which the sweet Psalmist of Israel had for them and their office. The policy which Absalom had followed in order to curry favour with the people had not appealed at all to these servants of the Lord, and therefore they steadfastly adhered to the king, in spite of the drastic change in his fortunes. Alas, how often has it been otherwise, when the religious leaders turned traitors at the time the ruling monarch most needed their support and ministrations.

Ministers of God should always set an example of submission and loyalty to "the powers that be" (Rom. 13:1), and more especially should they openly manifest their fealty unto those rulers who have countenanced and protected them in their pious labours, when those rulers are opposed by rebellious subjects. "Fear God. Honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17) are joined together in Holy Writ, and if the ecclesiastical leaders fail to render obedience to this Divine precept, how can we expect that those who are under their charge will do better? "They that are friends to the ark in their prosperity, shall find it a friend to them in their adversity. Formerly, David would not rest till he had found a resting place for the ark (Psa. 132); and now, if the priests may have their mind, the ark shall not rest till David returns to his resting place" (Matthew Henry).

“And the king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation” (2 Sam. 15:25). This too is very impressive, bringing out as it does the better side of David’s character. The presence of the Levites, and particularly of the ark, would have considerably strengthened the king’s cause. That ark had figured prominently in Israel’s history, and the very sight of it would hardly have failed to stir the hearts of the people. Moreover, it was the recognised symbol of God’s presence, esteemed by David more highly than anything else. But the king, like Eli of old, was very solicitous for the welfare of the sacred coffer, and therefore he refused to expose it to the possible insults of Absalom and his faction. He “preferred Jerusalem”—the honour of the Lord—“above his chief joy” (Psa. 137:6). Furthermore, David knew that he was under the Divine rebuke, and so felt himself to be unworthy for the ark to accompany him, and therefore while he was being chastised for his sins, he refused to pretend that God was on his side.

“If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation” (2 Sam. 15:25). Clearly, David recognised that everything hinged upon *the unmerited “favour”* of the Lord. This is a point of considerable importance, for our modern dispensationalists suppose that Israel was under such a stern regime of Law that the grace of God was virtually unknown, yea that, He did *not* exercise it till Christ appeared—a view based on an entirely erroneous interpretation of John 1:17. This is a great mistake, for the Old Testament Scriptures make it unmistakably clear that God’s free grace is the foundation of all blessing: see Numbers 14:8, Deuteronomy 10:15, 1 Kings 10:9, 2 Chronicles 9:8, Acts 7:46. It is very blessed to observe David’s “If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me back again and show me”—not “my place,” but—both “it and *His* habitation”: he valued the humble tabernacle far more highly than his own throne and honour!

“But if He thus say, I have no delight in thee; behold, here am I, let Him do to me as seemeth good unto Him” (2 Sam. 15:26). Precious submission was this. The Lord was rebuking him for his sins, and he knew not what would be the outcome. He humbled himself beneath the mighty hand of God, and left the issue to His sovereign pleasure. He hoped for the best, but was prepared for the worst. He realised that he deserved to suffer the continued displeasure of the Holy One, and therefore did he commit the outcome of his cause unto God’s sovereign grace. Mark it carefully, dear reader, that David saw *God’s* disciplinary hand in this dark hour of Absalom’s revolt, and *that* preserved him, in measure at least, both from rebellion against Heaven and the fear of man. The more we discern the controlling hand of the Most High in all events, the better for our peace of mind.

There is much important and precious instruction for our hearts in this incident. It is a true act of *faith* when we yield ourselves to that sovereign pleasure of God wherein He is “gracious to whom He will be gracious, and will show mercy on whom He will show mercy” (Exo. 33:19); yes, just as truly so as when we appropriate one of God’s promises and plead it before Him. We conceive it was thus that David’s faith now directed him in the sore strait that he was then in. He knew not how grievously the Lord was provoked against him, nor how things were now likely to go; so he bowed before His throne and left *Him* to determine the case. Many a sorely-stricken soul has obtained relief here when all other springs of comfort have completely failed him, saying with Job “Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him” (13:15).

A sin-entangled soul with guilt burdening his conscience, sees that, in himself, he is unquestionably lost: how the Lord will deal with him, he knows not. His signs and tokens are completely eclipsed; he can discern no evidence of God's grace in him, nor of His favour unto him. What is a guilt-bowed soul to do when he is at such a stand? To definitely turn his back upon God would be madness, for "who hath hardened himself against God, and hath prospered?" (Job 9:4). Nor is there the slightest relief to be obtained for the heart except from and by *Him*, for "who can forgive sins, but God only?" The only recourse, then, is to do as David did: bring our guilty soul into God's presence, wait upon the sovereign pleasure of His grace, and gladly acquiesce in His decision.

"If I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, He will bring me again, and show me both it, and His habitation" (2 Sam. 15:25). Here is an anchor for a storm-tossed soul: though it may not (at once) give rest and peace, yet it secures from the rock of abject despair. To solace the heart with a "who can tell *if* God will turn and repent, and turn away from His fierce anger, that we perish not?" (Jonah 3:9), or a "Who can tell *whether* GOD will be gracious to me?" (2 Sam. 12:22), is far better than giving way to a spirit of hopelessness. "Who knoweth if He will return and repent, and leave a blessing behind Him" (Joel 2:14): there the soul must abide until more light from above break forth upon it.—A.W.P.

The Divine Covenants.

5. *The Siniatic.*

The Siniatic Covenant needs to be studied from three independent viewpoints. First, the relation which it sustains to the previous revelations which had been granted by God, being a marked advance thereon in the unfolding of His eternal purpose. Second, considered with regard to the peculiar relation in which it stood to the Jewish nation, furnishing as it did a unique constitution and a complete code for their guidance. Third in its relation to the future, being admirably designed to pave the way for the advent of Christ and the dawn of Christianity. The first two of these have already engaged our attention; the third, which involves the most difficult aspects of our subject, we must now consider.

Until we had carefully contemplated the Mosaic economy as it related to the Nation of Israel, their political and temporal welfare, we were not ready to view it in its wider and ultimate significance. God's first and immediate design in connection with the Siniatic Covenant was to furnish a "letter" fulfillment of the promises made to Abraham: to give him numerous seed, to establish them in the land of Canaan, to preserve pure the stock from which the Messiah was to spring, to continue them there until Christ actually appeared in the flesh. Thus the Mosaic economy had served its purpose when the Son of God became incarnate. But, second, God's ultimate design under the Mosaic economy was to furnish a clear and full demonstration of the utter inability of fallen man, even under the most favourable conditions or circumstances, to meet His holy and righteous requirements; thereby making manifest the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the imperative need of an all-sufficient Saviour.

From one standpoint it certainly appears that the Siniatic Covenant completely failed to achieve its object and that the whole of the Mosaic economy was a pathetic tragedy. In nowise did Israel as a nation conduct themselves as the beloved, called, and redeemed people of God. They rendered not to the moral law the obedience which it required, and the mercies of the ceremonial law they perverted to God's dishonour and their own spiritual undoing. Instead of the Law leading sinners to Christ, "He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (John 1:11). Yet there is no failure with the Most High, no breakdown in His plan, no thwarting of His imperial will. The very failure of Israel only served to subserve the Divine purpose, for it demonstrated the imperative need of something superior to that which Judaism, as such, supplied, and reserved *for Christ* the honour of bringing in that which is perfect.

In seeking to ascertain *wherein* the Mosaic economy paved the way for the introduction of Christianity, we shall notice, first, the imperfection or inadequacy of the provision supplied by Judaism; and second, briefly consider the typification and foreshadowment it made of the better covenant yet to be established. Though the order of things which was instituted by the Siniatic Covenant was a great advance upon that which obtained under the Abrahamic—for it not only supplemented the covenant of promise (which pledged the Divine faithfulness to bestow every needed blessing) by the covenant of law, which bound Israel to yield that dutiful obedience to which the Lord was entitled; but it also brought the natural seed of Abraham into a relation of corporate nearness to the God of Abraham, providing in the tabernacle a visible representation that He was in their midst—yet, it belonged unto a state of comparative immaturity and the relative twilight of Divine revelation.

That which outstandingly characterised Judaism was that it concerned *the outward and objective*, rather than the inward and subjective. The Decalogue was written not upon the hearts of Israel, but upon tables of stone. It was a lord over them, demanding implicit submission, a schoolmaster to instruct them, but it supplied (as such) no power to produce obedience and no influence to move the secret springs of the heart. The same feature marked the Levitical institutions: they too were formally addressed to them from without, and pertained only to bodily exercises. The whole was an external discipline, in keeping with “a worldly sanctuary.” True, what the Law required was love, yet law as such does not *elicit* love. Fear was that which predominated—the dread of suffering the wrath of an offended God, which the penalties of His law threatened on every hand.

It is true that great relief was provided by the ceremonial law, for provision was there made for obtaining forgiveness. The means for effecting this was the sacrifices—“the life-blood of an irrational creature, itself unconscious of sin, being accepted by God in His character of Redeemer for the life of the sinner. A mode of satisfaction no doubt in itself unsatisfactory, since there was no correspondence between the merely sensuous life of an unthinkable animal and the higher life of a rational and responsible being; in the strict reckoning of justice the one could form no adequate compensation for the other. Put in this respect it was not singular; it was part of a scheme of things which bore throughout the marks of relative imperfection” (P. Fairbairn).

This same characteristic of relative imperfection appears on the tabernacle. A provisional arrangement was made whereby transgressors, otherwise excluded, might obtain the remission of their sins and enjoy again the privilege of fellowship with Jehovah; yet even here there was a conspicuous *incompleteness*, for though the reconciled were permitted to enter the outer court, yet they had no direct and personal access to the immediate presence-chamber of the Lord! How far, far below the freedom of intercourse which *all* believers may now have with God, was the entrance of a few ministering priests into the courts of the tabernacle, with access to the Holy of Holies granted to one person alone, and to him only one day in the year! While the tabernacle itself, in dimensions but a hundred cubits by fifty cubits, and in materials composed of earthly and perishable things—how inadequate a representation of the dwelling place of Him who filleth Heaven and earth!

The Law exhibited the ineffable holiness of the Divine character and bound Israel by covenant engagement to make that the standard after which they must seek to regulate all their conduct: “Ye shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2 and cf. Exo. 19:6). But when it was enlightened and aroused by the lofty ideal of truth and duty thus presented before it, conscience would be but the more sensible of transgressions committed against the very righteousness required. The Law is addressed to the conscience, and when once searched by it men could not fail to perceive its extent and spirituality. Just in proportion as an Israelite’s mind was honestly in exercise, he would come to understand that outward acts were far from being the only things which the Law demanded, that it reached unto the thoughts and intents, affections and motives of the heart; he would find it, as the Psalmist expressed “exceeding broad” (119:96). He might indeed, have attempted to silence the deep and distressing sense of guilt thus awakened, but unless deceived, those attempts would have brought him no help.

The Law, then, was far from inculcating or encouraging a spirit of self-righteousness. Instead of being a witness to which men could appeal in proof of their having met the re-

quirements of God, it became an accuser, testifying against them of broken vows and violated obligations. Thereby it kept perpetually alive in the conscience a sense of guilt, and served to awaken in the hearts of those who really understood its spiritual meaning a feeling of utter helplessness and a sense of deep need. Goaded by the demands of a Law which they were altogether incapable of fulfilling, their case must have seemed hopeless. Nor did the ordinances of the ceremonial Law afford them any more than a very imperfect relief. To them it must have been apparent that “the blood of calves and of goats could not take away sins.” A striking proof of this is furnished by the case of Isaiah, for upon beholding the manifested presence of Jehovah, he cried out “Woe is me! For I am undone” (6:5)—clear evidence that his conscience was more oppressed by a sense of sin than comforted by the blessing of forgiveness.

Such a case as Isaiah’s makes it plain that where there was an exercised heart (and there *were* such in Israel at every stage of their history), the holy Law of God had produced convictions much too deep for the provisions of the ceremonial law “to make him that did the service perfect as pertaining to the conscience” (Heb. 9:9). But more emphatic still is the testimony supplied by the Psalms, which, be it remembered, were used in the *public* service of God, being designed to express the sentiments of all sincere worshippers. Not only do these Psalms extol the manifold perfections of the Law (see especially the 19th and the 119th), but they also record *the piercing accusations* which is wrought. “For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in my flesh. I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Lord, all my desire is before Thee; and my groaning is not hid from Thee” (38:4-9). “For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me. Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me” (40:12, 13).

Thus the Divine Law, by presenting a standard of perfect righteousness and by convicting men of their utter inability to meet its holy demands, prepared their minds for the coming Redeemer. This it is which supplies the key to such passages as we have just quoted above. Awakened souls were made to feel iniquity cleaving to them like a girdle, and inward corruption like a deadly virus poisoning their very nature, breaking out continually in unholy tempers, defiling all they did or attempted, and thus destroying all hope of justification or acceptance with God on the ground of personal conformity to His requirements. Alive to the truth of an ineffably holy and infinitely perfect God, they were also alive to painful misgivings and fears of guilt; and hence their confessions of sin, sobs of penitence, and cries for mercy.

It was because the present deliverance furnished by the ceremonial law bore on it such marks of imperfection—the inadequacy of the blood of animals to atone for offenses so heinous, and the blessing secured being only a restored entrance to the outer court of the tabernacle—that it intimated a far better provision in the future; for nothing short of perfection could satisfy the One with whom they had to do. Because the Decalogue awakened a sense of guilt and alienation from the Lord which the ordinances of the ceremonial law could not perfectly remove, wants and desires aroused which could not then be more than partially satisfied, the Mosaic economy was well fitted to raise expectations in the

bosom of the worshipper of some “better thing to come,” disposing him to gladly receive the intimations of this which it was the part of prophecy to announce.

It was, then, the *spiritual* design of the Law (in addition to its *dispensational* purpose—to restrain sin, etc.) to quicken conscience, to produce a deep sense of guilt, to slay the spirit of self-righteousness, to impact a pungent sense of personal helplessness, thereby moving exercised souls to look forward in faith and hope to the promised Saviour. That there *was* the effect produced by the Law in an elect remnant, we have seen; that it *ought* to have been produced in all, cannot be fairly questioned. Thus, the Law materially contributed to the right understanding of the dispensation under which Israel was placed, and was also a wise and gracious means for disciplining their faith to look onward to the future for the proper fulfillment of what their carnal ordinances only shadowed in type, thereby confirming the expectations which their ritual encouraged, but could not, in the nature of things, satisfy.

The only course open to the awakened and exercised in Israel was to cast themselves unreservedly on the free mercy of God, in the sure hope that the future would reveal the perfect remedy and ransom when the promised Seed should appear, as the intimations of their figurative worship led them to expect, and by which all the exigencies of their case would be met. “Thus the Lord schooled them, fenced their path on every side, led them by the hand, and guided them to expect from that distant future what the present could not supply. Its convictions pointed to the relief which the Gospel alone was destined to furnish; it shut them up to the exercise of faith in the coming Redeemer” (John Kelly).

It is scarcely necessary for us to point out that God’s order in the dispensations (i.e. the Mosaic preceding the Christian and paving the way for it) is precisely the same as His order now in connection with each truly converted soul. It still remains true that “by the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20), and the sinner must be searched and humbled by it before he will be brought heartily to rejoice in the message of the Gospel. Not until the soul is conscious that it is under the Law’s sentence of *death* will it desire and appreciate the *life* that is to be found in Christ, and in Him alone—this the Apostle Paul testified he found to be the case in his own experience (Rom. 7:7-10). The Law is a perfect rule of righteousness, and when we measure ourselves by it our innumerable shortcomings and sins are at once made apparent. When, then, an Israelite was quickened by the Spirit, he at once perceived the Law’s true character, became deeply sensible of his guilt, and longed for something higher and better than was then provided for his true consolation.

The same fundamental principle receives plain and striking exemplification on the opening pages of the New Testament. The way of the Redeemer was prepared by one who proclaimed with trumpet voice the Law’s righteousness, evoking the terrors of its threatenings: the ministry of John the Baptist must ever precede that of Christ—there will never be a genuine revival until we get back to this basic fact and act accordingly. The Lord Jesus Himself entered upon His blessed work of evangelization by unfolding the wide extent and deep spirituality of the Law’s requirements, for a large portion of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) was devoted to a clear and searching exposition of the Law’s righteousness, rescuing it from the false glosses of men and pressing its holy claims upon the multitudes—this is why that “Sermon” is now so much hated by our moderns!—A.W.P.

Preserving Grace.

“And they came over unto the other side of the sea, into the country of the Gadarenes. And when He was come out of the ship, immediately there met Him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no man could bind him, no, not with chains: because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces: neither could any man tame him. And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones. But when he saw Jesus afar off, he ran and worshipped Him, and cried with a loud voice, and said, What have I to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the most high God? I adjure Thee by God, that Thou torment me not. For He said unto him, Come out of the man, thou unclean spirit. And He asked him, What is thy name? And he answered, saying, My name is Legion: for we are many. And he besought Him much that He would not send them away out of the country. Now there was there nigh unto the mountains a great herd of swine feeding. And all the devils besought Him, saying, Send us into the swine, that we may enter into them. And forthwith Jesus gave them leave. And the unclean spirits went out, and entered into the swine: and the herd ran violently down a steep place into the sea, (they were about two thousand;) and were choked in the sea. And they that fed the swine fled, and told it in the city, and in the country. And they went out to see what it was that was done. And they come to Jesus, and see him that was possessed with the devil, and had the legion, sitting, and clothed, and in his right mind: and they were afraid. And they that saw it told them how it befell to him that was possessed with the devil, and also concerning the swine. And they began to pray Him to depart out of their coasts. And when He was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed Him that he might be with Him. Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel” (Mark 5:1-20).

That the man, above recorded, was not only a *demoniac*, or man possessed with demons, but also a *maniac*, or *mad-man*, is evident from the text of verse 15, in which it is said, the people saw him “sitting, and clothed, and in his *right mind*.” And it is very evident that the expression “in his right mind” can have no reference to the work of the Holy Spirit in him as a sanctified soul, although it may be so spiritualized; for of this secret and Divine work, the common people or unconverted Gadarenes could be no judges, nor could it be cognizable to their senses; but the plain and obvious meaning of the text is this: that the man was restored to the use of his natural faculties, that his mind was both sound and intelligent.

In the passage above cited, the Church of Christ is presented with one of the most remarkable cases in the Book of God, of the preservation of a soul under great tribulation, from the act of *self-destruction*; of the miraculous deliverance of a child of God, under derangement of mind, from the dreadful crime of SUICIDE. In this affecting narrative, the Christian world is presented with an extraordinary display of the preservation of one of God’s elect (a lunatic) from the commission of suicide, though continually incited to the same, by a host or legion of devils!—of a man in whom the words of the Apostle were most truly exemplified, “preserved in Christ Jesus, and (*then*) called” (Jude 1). And, my brethren, if the soul of the “elect” be thus wondrously preserved in Christ Jesus *be-*

fore calling, or before the spiritual and saving manifestation of Christ to the soul, how much rather when that soul is sensibly and savingly sanctified by the *Presence* and *Indwelling* of God? “Know ye not (says the Apostle to the Church at Corinth) that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you.”

Think for a moment, my Christian friends, of the deplorable state and condition of this poor Maniac, and yet (O amazing truth) a vessel of God’s boundless and eternal mercy. Behold a man, whom no man could tame; fierce and ramping as a lion; a man isolated from his fellow-men—mad, forsaken, desolate; a miserable and terrific outcast; a man, literally *full of Devils!* Look to his habitation, among the corpses of the dead; and mark, this was not an occasional retreat, but his very *dwelling*-place; “who had his dwelling among the tombs.” Look too at the state of his body: naked, bleeding, and wounded: to the state of his mind—“crying continually”; driven about with a tempest, sometimes furiously rushing upon the mountains; at others, prowling and weeping among the tombs

Poor man! And hadst thou no friend to pity thee, none to speak peace to thy bleeding soul? Alas, who dared approach? for he was full of devils (it is worth to note that no sooner were these spirits permitted to enter the swine, than they led them to instant destruction!) spirits of the damned bent on *destruction*, and were urging their victim continually to the commission of SUICIDE, “by cutting himself with stones.”

Poor man! And hadst thou no eye to pity thee? Blessed be God! The eternal Jehovah was thy refuge; His everlasting arms were underneath; and therefore the gates of Hell *could not* prevail. “I will ransom them from the power of the grave; I will redeem them from death: O death, I will be thy plagues; O grave, I will be thy destruction: repentance shall be hid from Mine eyes” (Hosea 13:14). O the safety of the soul that is wrapped up in the “bundle of life,” and embosomed in the heart of God! Many waters cannot quench the flame of heavenly love, nor can the floods of Hell extinguish it. Such an one may be persecuted of devils, but he *shall not* be forsaken; cast down of Hell, but *not* destroyed. Sooner or later the sweet music of this precious promise shall ring in his ears, and bring peace and consolation to his afflicted soul: “Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of My righteousness” (Isa. 41:10).

O, my Christian brethren, could *we* have stood upon an eminence and beheld the ravings of this poor Maniac, how affecting had been the sight, how afflictive the contemplation! Now prowling like a wolf among the dwellings of the dead; then, furiously rushing up and down the mountains, crying, weeping, bleeding. Why does he not plunge from off the mountain’s brow and end his wild career? The arm of Omnipotence restrains him. Why not bleed to death of his wounds? An unseen hand binds them up. But how can mortality sustain such a conflict? The arms of God are underneath; and “Mercy (*in Christ*) embraceth him on every side.” Nature exhausted, he sinks upon the ground and falls insensibly to sleep. The rains drench his skin, the winds blow, (he hears them not), the tempest rages, and now the rays of the sun dart upon his defenseless head; and yet, he still survives!—a spark of heavenly, *unextinguishable* flame, tossed upon the rude ocean of turbulent and tormenting devils.

Poor and afflicted Child of Mercy! And wherefore thus grievously afflicted and tormented? That in the inscrutable decrees of Jehovah, he might become a Barnabas, a son of CONSOLATION! A pastor after God’s own heart, a feeder of the flock of Christ: “And he departed, and began to *publish* in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for

him: and *all men did marvel*" (Mark 5:20). A Preacher, not like many of the day who thrust themselves into the Ministry, the leprosy of whose presumption is stamped of God upon their foreheads, but a Minister of the Sanctuary, chosen of the Father, ordained of the Spirit, and sent forth of the Son, to testify of the remorseless tyranny of Satan, the helplessness and wretchedness of man, and the abundant and exceeding riches of the sovereign grace of God—a man of deep and heartfelt experience; a guide to the blind, and a champion for the truth; a preacher inspired of the Spirit, entrusted and empowered of God. But, poor afflicted Child of Mercy! wherefore wast thou thus grievously tried and tormented? That the power, grace, and glory of God may be transcendently manifest: that in the ages to come, the Church might behold (in this poor Maniac) a bright and living Epistle of the preservation of ALL God's blood-bought Family FROM THE APPALLING CRIME OF SUICIDE.

O, my Brethren, how full of sweet and heavenly consolation is the deliverance of this Demoniac to all the distressed and persecuted people of God! Behold a man without human control, without the restraint of human reason, and carried away by Devils as a flood, and yet PRESERVED FROM SUICIDE. Can a stronger case be possibly conceived, or can its parallel be found? Poor and afflicted child of God! hast thou a Legion of Devils in thy soul? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou driven as with a tempest night and day; no house, no home? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide. Art thou deprived of reason, and is thy body naked, bleeding wounded? Thou shalt *never* commit suicide; for the Spirit of the Lord shall go forth with healing in His wings, and shall pluck thee out of many waters: He shall bear thee as an olive branch through the windows of Heaven, and place thee, as the trophy of Mercy, in the bosom of thy God. "And the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10).

Tossed as a wreck, (with helm of reason lost) little did this Maniac dream of the mercies that awaited him on high: but no sooner has the appointed moment of deliverance arrived, than the Sun of righteousness dispels the gloom: and in His glorious beams the holy Dove descends, broods over her adopted child, and plucks Her darling from the lions. "Sing O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified Himself in Israel" (Isa. 44:23). Poor afflicted child of God! dost thou sometimes fear the violence of temptation will lead thee to the commission of Suicide? Behold a man in whom a legion of Devils appeared to have full sway, a fierce and ramping Maniac; in a word, a man who *seemed* forsaken of God, and given up to Hell, and yet *preserved from Suicide*. Hitherto thou shalt come, Satan, but no further, and *here* (TOUCH NOT HIS LIFE) shall thy proud waves be stayed.

Let us now turn to Job, that eminent example of suffering patience and affliction. Now, my friends, in looking over the sacred records of this good man, we find him pouring out his complaint in this impassioned strain: "My soul chooseth *strangling and death* rather than *life*" (Job 7: 15). But did Job's great afflictions lead him to the *commission of Suicide*? On the contrary, his language is most triumphant: "When He hath tried me (says Job) *I shall come forth as gold*." As gold glittering from the furnace, shining and sparkling for the Master's use, a vessel of honour for the temple of my God.

Now Job's trials were not ordinary, but altogether extraordinary; for he was greatly exercised both in his property, his family, his mind, and his faith; and yet, so far was he from committing suicide, that he even triumphs in the furnace and glories in the flame. "And He (the Lord) shall purify the sons of Levi (the elect of God) and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness."

My Christian friends, did Job *long* for death, *plead* for death, *pray* for death, *seek* for death more than a man seeks for hidden treasure? then why not rush into Suicide? The arms of omnipotent Jehovah were thrown around him; ("I am thy Shield") and when Satan came in *as a flood*, the Spirit of the Lord lifted up a standard against him. "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel (the Church of God); I will help thee, saith the LORD, and thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel."

To the point in question: how consolatory to the Church is Jehovah's charge to Satan when delivering up Job to be sifted as wheat: "Behold he is in thine hand, but save his life!" *Touch not his life!* As though the Lord had said, Satan, this is a prerogative I will yield to none, and will *never* yield to thee. This is a prerogative I will maintain inviolate with *all* my blood-bought children, lest, through the power of temptation, they fall into Suicide. And what said our Lord to Peter when under similar circumstances? "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." Now the language of our Lord to Peter is the language of Christ to His Church in all ages of the world; and if the faith of the Church fail not, how can they fall into Suicide.

But again, the Lord hath promised that "*He will keep* the feet of His saints." Now the promise is both absolute and universal, and will therefore apply itself to the saint under *all* states and circumstances; but how can the Lord keep the feet of His saint, if He suffer them, desperately, to rush into Suicide? Is not God faithfulness and truth? Hath He promised, and shall He not perform? Did He keep the feet of Job, and this poor Maniac? So, poor, tried, and tempted soul, will He also keep *thee*, for the Lord is not a man that He should lie, nor the Son of Man that He should repent. "My covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips."

Again, Paul testifies in the Spirit, "God will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make *a way to escape*"; but if through the power of temptation I fall into Suicide, I am *not* escaped, but *ensnared*. "Let God be true, and every man a liar." Again, the Lord hath promised His Church, that "when the enemy (Satan) shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him." Now this standard is God Himself. Shall God oppose Satan *in vain*? Again, it is said, "Blessed is the man that *endureth* temptation, for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life": but do I *endure* temptation if I become a Suicide? Now the children of God are the "blessed of God"; and the promise is of grace that it might "*be sure to all the seed*." It follows, therefore, that the saints will endure temptation, and *not fall* into Suicide.

Again, the Apostle propounds this question to the Church; "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" and then replies, "In ALL these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us": but do I TRIUMPH in tribulation, if tribulation drive me to Suicide? And lastly, it is the office of the Holy Spirit to work repentance (the dying thief repented, and made a confession to the glory of God!) *for sin* in the souls of ALL His saints. But how can there be repentance of that sin which carries me as a criminal be-

fore the Judge, and presents me reeking with the blood of life? Is there repentance in the grave? The Word says, No. Where then stands my *unrepentant* soul? Thus the crime of Suicide carries the offender beyond the pale of mercy (it carries him before God in the *very commission of his sin*), seals his awful doom, and apportioning him eternally with all the sons of perdition. Like Judas and Ahithophel, that man perishes in his iniquity.

Now the Spirit testifies, that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." My Christian Brethren, have you a *single case* in the Divine Record of a saint's falling into Suicide? I say, Have you a single case in *the whole Bible* of a saint's having fallen into the commission of that dreadful sin? You have none. You may search from Genesis to Revelation, but you will find none. Now, if the thing were possible, we ought to have an example, seeing the Word of God is given for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be "thoroughly furnished," but behold, we have NOT ONE! What, then, is the common inference or conclusion to be drawn from this memorable fact? The conclusion, I apprehend, will be thus: **THAT THE CHILD OF GOD, OR SPIRITUAL BELIEVER IN CHRIST, IS NEVER PERMITTED TO FALL INTO SUICIDE.**

But some say, Did not Samson commit Suicide? By no means. He died as a martyr, fighting in the cause of God. He fell contending with the world, and went triumphantly to glory. O there is a mighty difference in dying to the confusion of God's enemies, and falling as a Suicide to the confusion of friends! When Samson contended with a thousand of his foes, his life was prolonged; but in this, his last conflict, he fought, fell, and conquered as in a moment. Grasping the pillars upon which the house stood, Samson cried unto his God; and having received power from on high (the sanction of the HOLY ONE!) he bowed his head and yielded up the ghost. Like his blessed Lord and Master (of whom he was a glorious type) he overcame most in his death. Samson died a blessed martyr in the cause of God; he fell *not* into Suicide. Did Stephen shrink to declare the truth in the very teeth of his enemies? so neither did Samson shrink from the pillars of the house, though like Stephen, he were to be stoned to death. Thus fell these champions of the faith, scorning bodily deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. "He that hateth his life in this world," said our blessed Lord to His disciples, "shall keep it unto life eternal."

But it will be asked, Have not the saints of God ever *attempted* Suicide? Most certainly they have; both *before* and *after* calling. Like the poor Demoniack recorded by Matthew (17:15) they have oftentimes sought their own destruction; but, through Mercy, have, as oftentimes, been *wonderfully delivered*. "Thou shalt not die, but live, and declare the works of God." "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law but under grace." "Destitute, afflicted, tormented." One of the dear children of God determines upon self-destruction: carried as by a flood, she steals along the river's brink, selects the fatal spot, and is just about to plunge into the stream, when suddenly the voice of God is heard; in an instant, Satan's fled, the soul set free, and Christ has resumed His throne. O Satan, "thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall, but *the Lord helped me!*" "The Lord is my strength and song, and is become my Nation." Another child of God draws the knife, but the weapon fails. Another grasps the cup of poison, but his hand so trembles that he cannot hold it to his lips. Another takes a halter and looks for a beam, but is prevented he knows not how. Another suspends his body from a door, but soon the fas-

tening fails, and he drops to the floor. Carnal professors, whose hearts have been “swept and garnished” by themselves, never dream of such temptations as these, and are ready to reproach and accuse the children of God when thus exercised; but let such professors remember God hath not spoken in vain, “when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.” Carried by this flood, David fell into adultery and murder; and poor boasting Peter cursed and swore, and declared he knew not his Lord and Master. Merciful God! What ways and means hast Thou devised to prove the unchangeableness of Thy sovereign mercy, the *immutability* of Thy Covenant love! “My Covenant will I *not* break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips.”

But, it may be asked, are there not instances of men celebrated for knowledge of Divine mysteries, and of most exemplary conduct, falling into the crime of Suicide? The fact is notorious, and cannot be denied: but that we may reply to the question effectually, let us turn to the Word of Truth, the unerring testimony of God. “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, (Christ *dwelling in my soul*) I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal.” In other words, though I be ever so *gifted*, and have not *grace*, I am nothing. As a preacher I may be greatly attractive to my hearers; as “one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument”; but if Christ be not formed in my soul “the hope of glory” I am nothing. Even David, that eminent man of God, was deceived in this matter. He took a man of gifts, for a man of grace; but as he advanced in the Divine life, God showed him greater things. He went to the house of God with Ahithophel and took sweet counsel together, and thought him a dear brother in the Lord; but in time of temptation this high-sounding professor (this cymbal of the Sanctuary) fell away. He sided with Absalom in the rebellion, pleaded against the sweet singer of Israel, and sought to compass the death of the king, by the very son of his bowels! I say, therefore, though men be gifted to speak as with the tongues of men and of angels, and draw the eyes of the Church upon them as the beloved of God, if they be not TEMPLES OF THE HOLY GHOST (truly “born of God”), in time of temptation they fall away.

Of the *sanctified* Professor, the Lord hath declared, “No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper”; but of unsanctified professors, however eloquent and commanding their gifts and attainments, “in time of temptation they fall away.” And hence the propriety of the apostolic injunction; “Let him who *thinketh* he standeth, take heed lest he fall”: and again, “If a man think himself to be something (a Christian) when he is nothing (not so), he deceiveth himself.” As, therefore, in the apostolic days, so in the present, men may be found so highly gifted that for a season they deceive the very elect: “But they went out from us,” says the Apostle, “because THEY WERE NOT OF US.” The question, therefore, may be thus scripturally solved: such men have received *gifts*, but they have *not* received God—the GIVER: now, what are the gifts of the Bridegroom, to the Bridegroom himself?

Let no man, therefore, and especially a teacher in Israel, presume to judge his brethren in this matter; nor consider the flock contumacious, because they cannot, dare not receive unauthorized, the unscriptural affirmation, that men of grace may, *unwittingly* play the part of Judas, and fall into the crime of Suicide. “To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is *no light* in them.”

Let the ministers of Christ remember they are not to set themselves up as judges of doctrine for the Church, but the Church are to judge the doctrine of their minister; and if

it be of God, to receive it; and if not, to condemn it. "Let the prophets speak," says Paul, "and let the other (the Church) judge." Nay, farther, If the Church have authority to try the doctrine of the Apostles, how much more, ministers of the present day? "But though we," says Paul, "or an Angel from Heaven preach any other Gospel unto you, than that which is preached, let him be accursed."

Let no man, therefore, contend against the Word; nor presume to affirm, without the shadow of Divine proof, that the elect of God, may under *any* circumstances, fall into the commission of Suicide. It is surely impossible; seeing that God, *who cannot lie*, hath declared by the mouth of His faithful Apostle, "*He will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able, but will with the temptation MAKE A WAY TO ESCAPE.*" "Many are the afflictions of *the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all.*" Of *unsanctified* professors, the Lord hath said, "in time of temptation **THEY FALL AWAY**"; but of the *sanctified* professor, "mark the perfect man, and behold the upright, for the *end* of that man is **PEACE.**" (George Hunt, 1848: a pamphlet entitled "The child of God is never permitted to fall into suicide.")

The Doctrine of Sanctification.

12. *Its Process.*

By the process of sanctification we mean the principal *actings* of those who have already been manifestatively set apart by God unto Himself and for Himself. To speak of the actings of sanctification necessarily presupposes *a previous principle* of holiness from which they arise. Sanctification, as we have pointed out in previous articles, begins with, and continues as a consequent of, regeneration. Viewed from the experimental and practical side, sanctification is not a Divine act, but a *work* of God's grace, wherein He sustains and develops, continues and perfects, that which He imparted at the new birth. Thus considered, sanctification is *a growth*, under the supporting and fructifying influences of the indwelling Holy Spirit: a growth from spiritual infancy to childhood, from childhood to youth, from youth to spiritual maturity. This growth follows a two-fold process: the mortification of the old nature, and the vivification of the new nature.

Throughout that twofold process there is a concurrence between the Spirit and the believer, and this, because holiness is both a *privilege* and a *duty*, a Divine gift and a human attainment. To our last statement some are likely to take exception, for the balance of Truth has been well-nigh lost on this subject. Antinomies insist that sanctification is solely the work of God, and that the believer has no part or hand in it. Pelagians virtually affirm that it is entirely the product of human industry. From one viewpoint, sanctification is indeed the work of God, but from another it is the work of man, assisted by supernatural grace. As a *privilege*, sanctification is the subject of promise and prayer: see Ezekiel 36:25-27, John 17:17, 1 Thessalonians 5:23. But as a *duty*, sanctification is the subject of exhortation: see Ezekiel 18:31, 2 Corinthians 7:1, 1 Peter 1:15.

Those who are so insistent upon affirming that sanctification is entirely the work of God, and that man has no part in it, overlook God's general *method of working*. Behold His handiwork in Nature. God does not create trees fully grown, nor even plants with flowers fully developed. Instead, they first exist as tiny seeds, and then they develop gradually unto maturity, and their growth is made dependent on the outworking of natural laws—supplies of rain and sunshine—and often of human cultivation. So it is spiritually. In the realm of grace, God works by means and according to the sequences of law. "Although the strength with which we believe is wholly and entirely from the Spirit, and put into the soul by Him who is said to 'strengthen us in the inner man' (Eph. 3:16), yet He useth apt and suitable motives, by and with which He conveys it, and conveys it answerable to the fitness and force that is in such motives to work upon an intelligent creature" (Thomas Goodwin, Vol. 8., p. 108).

Sanctification is *our work not* as though we could change our own hearts from the love of sin to the love of God, nor even when they are changed to carry forward that change to perfection or completion; no, it is only as we are enabled from on High, for of ourselves we can do nothing (John 15:5). It is our work as we diligently *use* the appointed means, and *trust* God to make them effectual. It is God's work as the Spirit employs powerful motives to influence us to action. For instance, He impresses us with the fact that God's eye is ever upon us, and this causes us to walk softly before Him. Or, He applies to our hearts the solemn warnings of Scripture, so that we are afraid to sport with sin or give heed to Satan's allurements. Or again, He fills the heart with a sense of Christ's dying love for us, so that the springs of gratitude are set in motion, and we endeavour to

please and glorify Him. By various considerations the Holy Spirit stirs up the believer to resist sin and cultivate holiness.

The process of our sanctification, then, is both a Divine and a human one. Having dwelt so much upon the Divine side in the earlier articles we now continue our consideration of the human. This process is a protracted one, so that the believer gradually becomes more and more out of love with sin and in love with holiness. Now, as we have said above, this spiritual growth follows the twofold process of mortification and vivification. Yet those two actings are not so distinct that the one can go on independently, or at a distinct time from the other, for the one necessarily accompanies the other; nevertheless, in explaining that process of experimental and practical sanctification they need to be separately expounded; and a little reflection will show the *order* in which they need to be contemplated—we have to die to sin before we can live to God.

“Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth: fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection” etc. (Col. 3:5). This means, put to death those fleshly lusts which are set upon earthly objects, and thus prevent their evil fruits of “fornication” etc.: with this expression “your *members* which are upon the earth” compare “the *body of sin*” (Rom. 6:6), which does not mean our physical body, though sin acts through it. The term “mortify” is not used in Scripture absolutely to kill and destroy, so as that which is mortified no longer has any being, but rather that it should be rendered impotent and useless, unable to produce its wicked works. In proof of this assertion, let it be carefully noted that the same Greek word which is translated “mortify” in Colossians 3:5 is rendered “and being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now *dead*, when he was about a hundred years old” (Rom. 14:19). Now the body of Abraham was not absolutely dead, but the natural force and vigour of it was considerably abated.

The object of this duty of mortification is *indwelling sin*, which may be viewed in a threefold manner: its root or principle, its disposition and powers, its effects or fruits. The root of indwelling sin is that depraved habit or principle which inclines fallen man unto all that is evil: it is “the flesh” or “our old man.” The disposition or powers of indwelling sin are designated its “affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24), “deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22), “secret (hidden, inward) faults” (Psa. 19:12). Its effects or fruits are its open transgressions against God’s Law. Now to “mortify” sin is a continual act or work, whereby we are to strive against sin, sap its power, rendering it impotent to beget evil works. The same duty (with relation to the death of Christ as the meritorious and efficient cause of it), is expressed by *crucifying* the flesh (Gal. 5:24)—a form of death which is a painful and lingering one.

Mortification consists of a deliberate and diligent opposition to the solicitations of sin. It is the exercise and working of that hatred of sin which the Spirit communicated to the heart at the new birth. It is taking sides with the new nature against the flesh. It is the acting out of the grace received at regeneration unto a continual endeavour in the subjugating of the old nature, so that we may be able truthfully say with the Apostle “*I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection*” (1 Cor. 9:27). It is the putting forth of our utmost endeavours to resist our corruptions by all those methods prescribed in the Gospel. It is the “putting off of the old man” (Eph. 4:22): a displacing it from its former throne in the heart, so as no longer to yield obedience to its lusts or walk according to its dictates.

There are but two masters which divide the world between them; sin and God. Every man serves one of them, but no man can *serve* both. Every man serves either sin or righteousness, God or Satan, for there is no middle or neutral state: either their time and strength are spent in the service of the flesh, or the service of God. "For they that are after the flesh, do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit" (Rom. 8:5); "For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Gal. 6:8). How it concerns us, then, to consider *what or who* it is that *employs* our souls! The faculties of the soul and the energies of the body cannot be inactive: they must be employed one way or the other—Heavenwards or Hellwards.

Both of these services are entered *by consent*: "Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness" (Rom. 6:16). It is true there are degrees in this, some yielding up themselves more completely and entirely than others; nevertheless, the service which the unregenerate render to sin and the service which the regenerate render to righteousness, is quite voluntary. Of the one we read "The heart of the sons of men is *fully set in them* to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11), and again "Who being past feeling *have given themselves over* unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:19); of the other it is written "but first *gave their own selves to the Lord*" (2 Cor. 8:5). No excuses, no quibblings, no reasonings can neutralize the plain testimony of these Scriptures. Each man freely follows the bent of his own heart and pursues that which he is most in love with. The great difference between the regenerate and the unregenerate is this: the one *denies* self, the other *gratifies* it.

"Self denial lies in a man's renouncing, foregoing, and postponing all his pleasures, profits, relations, interest, and whatever he enjoys, which may be in competition with Christ. From love to Him, and to be given up at His command. A self-denying person seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and leaves all other things with God, to bestow upon him as He thinks fit; and what He has given him, he is ready at His command to bring all he has and place it at His feet, as the first Christians brought all they had and laid it at the Apostles' feet. This is self-denial" (John Gill). The great motive to this is the example left us by the Son of God Himself: see Philippians 2:5-8.

Mortification consists in the application to the heart and life of the principle of the Cross. It does not denote the abolition of sin in the believer or the present destruction of its being: our corruptions are not put off until we leave this world. Nor is the work of mortification to be understood in the literal and natural sense of the term, by the starving or scourging of the body: many deluded souls mistake the mortification of the *body* for the mortification of *sin*. Nor does it consist in the suppressing of the external acts of sin only, for sin may reign over the heart where the outward conduct is highly esteemed among men. Nor should it be supposed that the mortification of sin has taken place because some particular inclination which formerly predominated is now weakened, for the effects of illness or the advances of old age often produce this consequence.

No, mortification is the purging of the soul, the freeing of it from that slavery of the flesh which detained it from God and disabled it from the duties of a holy and heavenly life. It is the resisting and denying of our corrupt inclinations. It is founded in a hatred of them, and not simply in fear of their consequences. It is not a bare abstinence from acts of evil, but an abhorrence for them *from a regard to the authority of God* in His Law, which

forbids them. This is most important to note, for there is much abstaining from outward acts of sin where there is not a grain of holiness in the heart. There are various prudential considerations which deter many from crime, such as the fear of human punishment, the loss of reputation among men, the jeopardizing of a lucrative position, or concern for their health. But evangelical mortification proceeds from an abhorrence of evil and has respect to the will of Him who forbids its exercise.

Evangelical mortification rises from the principle of grace in the renewed soul, for that principle heartily approves both the precepts and prohibitions of the Law. And herein lies the imperative need of self-examination, observing our hearts and ascertaining *from what* views and motives we act, otherwise there will be little or no real holiness, even though our outward conduct be such as raises it above the censure of those who know us best. We have no warrant whatever to deem ourselves any further holy than as we act under the influence of *spiritual* considerations: that is, doing what we do out of love to God, with a respect unto His authority, seeking His glory. It is a very dangerous mistake to suppose that all opposition to sin is genuine mortification, and therefore we need to carefully examine into the *design and ends* of our actions.

Mortification of sin is one of the chief duties and should be the daily business of every Christian. Some who seem much mortified to bodily lusts, are yet greatly captivated by intellectual lusts. They do not wallow in the mire of immorality, drunkenness, and other fleshly gratifications, but they are full of pride, envy, covetousness, malice, contempt of others, which lusts are just as vile in themselves and as hateful to God as the others. True grace opposes lusts of *every* kind, for it will not connive at any evil. The new nature is just as much antagonistic to internal eruptions of sin as to the outward acts: necessarily so, for without this there is no purity of heart and nothing of that holiness which is indispensably requisite for eternal happiness. Many appear to think otherwise, and therefore so long as their lusts break not forth into outward acts of sin, they are well pleased with themselves.

Alas, what multitudes are fatally deceived at this very point: the externals of religion and the outward acts of morality are all that concern them. But God is to be worshipped “in spirit and in truth,” if He is to be worshipped acceptably; and none but the pure in heart are admitted into Heaven. O how few make conscience of evil thoughts, or the first motions of the affections after that which is prohibited: the “plague of his own heart” (1 Kings 8:38) occasions them no concern—which is sure proof that they are not indwelt by the Holy Spirit. God requires the *heart* (Prov. 23:26), and if we give not *that* to Him, then He receives nothing which He values in the slightest degree. Such was the case with the Pharisees—and they have numerous successors today—whom our Lord compared to whited sepulchres, which are beautiful *without*, but within are full of putridity.

Here is the great difference between faith and presumption: the one hates sin, is plagued by its presence, and mourns over its activities; the other is bold in sinning, persuades itself of security in Christ, lightly passes over its commission, having little remorse when guilty of it. Evangelical mortification of sin, then, respects not only the behaviour, but the heart, for *there* it begins. Its aim is to produce *spirituality of mind*, for “to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (Rom. 8:6). Abhorrence of evil, love of God, and a delight in conformity to His will, is the root of it, and where these be not in some measure, there is *nothing* of that mortification which God

requires. Indwelling sin must not be spared, but attacked, for there is no other way of being freed from bondage to it, but by constantly opposing it, root and branch.

Every unmortified sin will weaken the soul, so as to deprive it of its strength Godwards, and it will darken the soul, so as to deprive it of its peace and comfort. Observe what an unmortified lust in the heart did for David: "When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my moisture is turned into the drought of summer" (Psa. 32:3, 4). So too unmortified lust spreads a cloud over the soul, so that the beams of God's favour are intercepted: "Your sins have hid His face from you" (Isa. 59:2). Nothing is so destructive of communion with God as the allowance of sin. Nothing is so opposed to our best interests as the indulgence of fleshly lusts. Nothing presents so serious a stumbling block to babes in Christ's family as to behold the older members of it trifling with that which caused His crucifixion. If He died *for* sin, surely we must die *to* sin.

On the other hand, there is a blessedness which results from mortification which should set every Christian to be more diligent and earnest in the prosecution of it. There is a double comfort in mortification: one in the nature of the work itself, as it is a God-appointed duty; the other as it respects Christ, affording evidence of our union with Him. God will be no man's debtor, and He richly rewards those who set themselves to the work He has assigned. What a blessed tranquility of conscience and joy of heart is ours when we have faithfully repelled temptations and successfully resisted our corruptions! What recompense is found in the smile of God! There is then a Heaven within—whereas the wicked have a taste of Hell, in their gripes of conscience and terrors of the wrath to come. Moreover, mortification evidences our interest in Christ (Gal. 5:24): those endeavours of mortification, sincere yet feeble, plainly show that the Holy Spirit is in me, and what joy such assurance brings!

Further, the daily mortification of indwelling sin not only has much to do with the comforts enjoyed by our souls, but it is instrumental in fitting us to be used by Christ, in whatever humble capacity He is pleased to employ us. "If a man therefore *purge himself* from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and *meet* for the Master's use, and prepared unto every good work" (2 Tim. 2:21). What is the blessedness of life but in being of some use in the Lord's vineyard? Only so far as we live a fruitful life unto God, do we answer the end of our being. But let a proud, a carnal, or a worldly heart be employed in any service to the Lord, and such an heart is certain to spoil the work by managing it for some *self* end. Sin is a disease, a consumption upon the inner man, and so far as it prevails, unfits us to be used by Christ. When the Lord employed Isaiah, He first *purged* his iniquity: Isaiah 6:7, 8!

Temptations can only be resisted in proportion as we devote ourselves to the work of mortification. It is the condition of our heart which determines whether or not we respond to Satan's allurements. So too afflictions are unsupportable without mortification. My reader, you live in a mutable world, where Providence rings the changes in all its affairs. You that have husband or wife may be left desolate tomorrow. You that have riches or children may be bereft of both before you are aware. Sickness treads upon the heels of health, and death as surely follows life as the night does the day. Consider well with yourself: are you able to bear the loss of your sweetest enjoyments with patience? O get the heart mortified to all these things, and you will bless a *taking* as well as a *giving* God.—A.W.P.

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

7. *The Cruelty of Jacob's sons: Genesis 34.*

When we do not attend to *the design of God* with respect to the family of Jacob, we are inclined not only to blame the guilty conduct of two of the sons of Jacob, with respect to the Shechemites, but to regret the result of that nefarious doing. To human wisdom a fair prospect was opened of extending the knowledge and worship of God. Why, then, did the hand of Providence interpose and entirely break off this happy alliance? To those acquainted with the typical character of Israel, a moment's consideration will show it was necessary to prevent the union of the accursed nations of Canaan with the family of Jacob. The nations of Canaan are in time to be expelled, and no union must be formed that will prevent this. As the kingdom of Christ is distinguished from the kingdom of Satan, so the nation of Israel, the type of Christ's kingdom, must be distinct from the nations of Canaan, the types of God's enemies in every age.

Besides, a religious accession of the Shechemites to the house of Jacob, from the political motives on which they were about to act, was more likely to draw the worshippers of God into idolatry, than to draw idolaters into the service of God. The union proposed would most likely have ended in the rapid apostasy of the children of Israel. The union, then, must be prevented, and the guilty conduct of the sons of Jacob was overruled by God to prevent the union. The thing was of God, though all the guilt of it was with man. A sovereign Providence knew how to execute His purposes by the hands of wicked men.

Divine Providence could have prevented this union in many ways. He had, no doubt, a sufficient reason for that way which He actually did employ. It affords a striking emblem of the wisdom of the world in adopting a profession of Christianity from worldly motives, and the folly of such wisdom. However wise the men of this world may think themselves in their conduct with respect to the religion of Christ, from political motives, in the end, certain, and dreadful, and sudden will be their destruction. How many thousands, called Christians, are influenced in religion by no higher motives than those employed by Hamor and Shechem to persuade their subjects to embrace the religion of the house of Jacob! The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God.

8. *Jacob's escape from their vengeance: Genesis 35:5.*

But were the sons of Jacob blind through revenge? If their thirst of blood had been ever so great, might we not expect that they would still have respect to their safety? If they should succeed, by their abominable hypocrisy, in cutting off the people of Shechem, could they expect to escape the vengeance of the neighbouring nations? Shall a single family undertake a quarrel against a multitude of nations, among whom they reside as strangers? Had they reflected, what could they expect but destruction to themselves and to the whole house of their father? It is evident that they could not have trusted for deliverance to the God of Israel, for they who believe and trust in Him also *obey Him*. Could they thus expect safety in this enormous violation of the law of God? It is evident they thought of nothing but of gratifying their revenge. They were blinded by the fury of their wrath.

But, notwithstanding this, God did not forget His servant Jacob. Divine Providence casts a shield over him, and his guilty sons. But what were *the means* that God saw fit to make use of on this occasion for the deliverance of Jacob? Did He order Jacob to face His adversaries in the field, promising him the victory? Often He did so with the house of Israel. But not so here. This would have had an appearance of compromising the character

of the Ruler of the world. He would have appeared to be like the gods of the Greeks and Trojans, without respect to right and wrong. God, therefore, employs not the children of Israel to defend themselves on this occasion. Here His wisdom sees fit to act without human means. Instead of delivering through the hands of men, He acts, by His Providence, on the minds of the affected nations, and fills them with the fear of the family of Jacob. The family of Jacob were but a handful of people, yet the Sovereign Lord made them a terror to powerful nations: “And the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob.”—A.W.P.