

Volume 20--Studies in the Scriptures—March, 1941**THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.**

“And God spake all these words, saying, I am the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage” (Exo. 20:1, 2). This Preface to the Moral Law is to be regarded as having equal respect to all the Ten Commandments, (and not to the first one only) containing as it does the most weighty arguments to enforce our obedience to them. As it is the custom of kings and governors to prefix their names and titles before the edicts set forth by them, to obtain the more attention and veneration to what they publish, so with the great God, the King of kings, being about to proclaim a Law for His subjects, that He might affect them with a deeper reverence for His authority and make them the more afraid to transgress those statutes which are enacted by so mighty a Potentate and so glorious a Majesty, blazons His august Name upon them.

What has just been pointed out above is clearly established by those awe-inspiring words of Moses to Israel: “That thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, THE LORD THY GOD” (Deut. 28:58). “I am the LORD thy God.” The word for “LORD” is “Jehovah,” who is the Supreme, Eternal and Self-existent One, the force of which is (as it were) spelled out for us in “which was, and is, and is to come” (Rev. 4:8); the word for “God” is “Elohim,” the plural of Eloah, for though He be one in nature yet is He three in His Persons. And this Jehovah, the Supreme Object of worship, is “thy GOD,” because in the past He was thy Creator, in the present He is thy Ruler, and in the future He will be thy Judge; in addition, He is the “God” of His elect by covenant-relationship and therefore their Redeemer. Thus, our obedience to His Law is enforced by these considerations: His absolute authority, to beget fear in us—He is “the Lord thy God”; His benefits and mercies, to engage love—“which brought thee out of the (antitypical) house of bondage.”

“Thou shalt have no other gods before Me” (Exo. 20:3) is the First Commandment. Let us briefly consider its meaning. We note its singular number: “thou” not “ye,” addressed to each person separately, because each of us is concerned therein. “Thou shalt *have* no other gods” has the force of, you shall own, possess, seek, desire, love or worship none other. “No other gods”; they are called such not because they are so either by nature or by office (Psa. 82:6), but because the corrupt hearts of men make and esteem them such—as in “whose God is their belly” (Phil. 3:19). “Before Me” or “My face,” the force of which is best ascertained by His word to Abraham,

“Walk before *Me* and be thou perfect” or “upright” (Gen. 17:1)—conduct yourself in the realization that you are ever in My presence, that Mine eye is continually upon you. This is very searching. We are so apt to rest contented if we can but approve ourselves before men and maintain a fair show of godliness outwardly; but Jehovah searches our innermost being and we cannot conceal from Him any secret lust or hidden idol.

Let us next consider the positive duty enjoined by this First Commandment. Briefly stated, it is this: you shall choose, worship and serve Jehovah as your God, and Him only. Being who He is—your Maker and Ruler, the Sum of all excellence, the supreme Object of worship—He admits of no rival and none can vie with Him. See then the absolute reasonableness of this demand and the madness of contravening it. This Commandment requires from us a disposition and conduct suited to the relation in which we stand to the Lord as our God, as the only adequate Object

of our love and the only One able to satisfy the soul. It requires that we have a love for Him stronger than all other affections, that we take Him for our highest portion, that we serve and obey Him supremely. It requires that all those services and acts of worship which we render unto the true God be made with the utmost sincerity and devotion (implied in the “before Me”) excluding negligence on the one hand and hypocrisy on the other.

In pointing out *the duties* required by this Commandment we can not do better than quote the Westminster Confession of Faith. They are “the knowing and acknowledging of God to be the only true God, and our God (1 Chron. 28:9; Deut. 26:17, etc.); and to worship and glorify Him accordingly (Psa. 95:6, 7; Matt. 4:10, etc.); by thinking (Mal. 3:16), meditating, (Psa. 63:6), remembering (Eccl. 12:1), highly esteeming (Psa. 71:19), honouring (Mal. 1:6), adoring (Isa. 45:23), choosing (Josh. 24:15), loving (Deut. 6:5), desiring (Psa. 73:25), fearing of Him (Isa. 8:13), believing Him (Exo. 14:31), trusting (Isa. 26:4), hoping (Psa. 103:7), delighting (Psa. 37:4), rejoicing in Him (Psa. 32:11), being zealous for Him (Rom. 12:11), calling upon Him, giving all praise and thanks (Phil. 4:6), and yielding all obedience and submission to Him with the whole man (Jer. 7:23), being careful in all things to please Him (1 John 3:22), and sorrowful when in anything He is offended (Jer. 31:18; Psa. 119:136), and walking humbly with Him (Micah 6:8).”

Those duties may be summarized in these chief ones. First, the diligent and lifelong seeking after a fuller knowledge of God as He is revealed in His Word and works, for we cannot worship an unknown God. Second, the loving of God with all our faculties and strength which consists of an earnest panting after Him, and deep joy in Him, and a holy zeal for Him. Third, the fearing of God, which consists of an awe of His majesty, supreme reverence for His authority, and a desire for His glory—as the love of God is the motive-spring of obedience, so the fear of God is the great deterrent of disobedience. Fourth, the worshipping of God according to His appointments. The principal aids to which are: study of and meditation upon the Word, prayer, and putting into practice what we are taught.

“Thou shalt have no other Gods before Me”: that is, you shall not give unto anyone or anything in Heaven or earth that inward heart affiance, loving veneration, and dependence upon, which is due only to the true God; you shall not transfer to another that which belongs alone unto Him. Nor must we attempt to divide them between God and another, for no man can serve two masters. The great *sins forbidden* by this Commandment are: first, willful ignorance of God and His will through despising those means by which we may acquaint ourselves with Him. Second, atheism or the denial of God. Third, idolatry or the setting up of false and fictitious gods. Fourth, disobedience and self-will or the open defiance of God. Fifth, all inordinate and immoderate affections or the setting of our hearts and minds upon other objects.

They are idolaters and transgressors of this First Commandment who manufacture a God out of the figment of their own mind. Such are the Unitarians, who deny that there are three Persons in the Godhead. Such are Romanists, who supplicate the Saviour’s mother and affirm that the pope has power to forgive sins. Such are the vast majority of Arminians, who believe in a disappointed and defeated Deity. Such are sensual Epicureans (Phil. 3:19), for there are inward idols as well as external—“these men have set up their idols in their hearts” (Ezek. 14:3); “covetousness which is idolatry” (Col. 3:5) and by parity of reason so are all immoderate desires. That object to which we render those desires and services which are due alone to the Lord is our “God,”

whether it be self, gold, fame, pleasure or friends. What is your God? To what is your life devoted?—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

17. *The Single Eye*: Matthew 6:22, 23.

“The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:22-23). In these words Christ continues to illustrate and enforce the principle which He had inculcated all through this part of His Sermon, namely, the vital importance and imperative necessity of a pure motive and right aim in all we do. First, He had shown this in the matter of our “alms” or deeds of charity, if the same are to meet with God’s acceptance (vv. 2-4). Second, He had insisted thereon in connection with our “prayers,” if they were to meet with God’s approval (vv. 5-15). Next, He had pointed out the same in regard to “fasting,” if we are to receive anything more than the hypocrite’s portion (vv. 16-18). Then He had applied the same principle to the laying up of riches, pointing out that where our treasure is, there will our heart be also (vv. 19-21). And how are we to obtain right views of what the true and imperishable “treasure” is, and where it is to be found? This is the question which our Lord here anticipated and proceeded to answer.

By use of a striking figure Christ proceeded to urge upon His hearers that their undivided gaze must be fixed upon the things which are above. “The light (or better, “lamp”) of the body is the eye.” This refers in the first instance to the light of reason, which distinguishes man from the lower orders of creation: animals are guided by their instincts, but man was to be regulated by his intelligence, an intelligence which capacitated him for communion with his Maker, and so long as he remained in communion with Him who is Light, his mind would so inform and govern his soul that all his ways would be ordered to God’s glory and meet with His approbation. But alas, man forsook the Fountain of all blessing, left the place of dependency, and apostatized. As the consequence his “eye” became “evil,” or in other words, his understanding was darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in him because of the blindness of his heart (Eph. 4:18). Hence the imperative need of his being renewed in the spirit of his mind (Eph. 4:23).

In seeking to ponder the verses which are now before us it needs to be carefully borne in mind that Christ was not here addressing a heathen audience or part of the profane world, but Jews who professed to be the Lord’s people. As such they were far from being atheists or infidels, rather did they acknowledge the Supreme Being and perform outward worship unto Him, though for the most part their hearts were far from Him. Their aims and intentions were divided: that is why in verse 24 the Saviour warns them, “No man can serve two masters,” which was the very thing they were vainly attempting. Hence it should be carefully noted that Christ did not here say “if thine eye be *good*” (which would be the most obvious antithesis from the “evil eye” in the next verse), but “if thine eye be *single*,” which both anticipates and forms a link with verse 24. Yet it is also to be pointed out that our Lord used the most suitable word pathologically, for a good or sound vision is a “single” one—to see double or to look at different objects or different parts of an object with each eye is proof that our visual organs are defective, a sign of approaching blindness.

Now at regeneration the eye of the soul is renewed and its vision rectified, the eye of faith is opened, the understanding is Divinely enlightened, and God becomes its all-absorbing object and His glory the chief concern of its possessor. In consequence, the whole of the soul is now “full of

light," all its faculties come under its beneficent influences: the conscience being informed, the affections warmed, the will moved to action in the right direction. An enlightened understanding and a Divinely-instructed conscience is now able to distinguish between things that differ, between good and evil, things heavenly and things earthly. Thereby the child of God discriminates between the voice of Christ, the true Shepherd, from the voice of all false shepherds; between the Source of true happiness and those broken cisterns which hold no water. Thus the believer, by means of his spiritual judgment (which is informed and educated by the Word of God) determines and gives sentence of things: what is to be done and what is to be avoided; endowed with heavenly wisdom he learns the secret of real blessedness and joy unspeakable.

But let it be pointed out that it is only so long as the believer's "eye" *remains* "single" in a practical way that his whole body (soul) is "full of light." As the physical eye, the organ of sight, has no light whatever of its own, but must be illumined from without, so the renewed understanding is entirely dependent upon God for constant enlightenment. As the physical eye is the receptacle of light, and by means of its rays gives light to the body, so the understanding and conscience are the medium through which spiritual instruction is received into the soul. And as the body is left to grope its way in darkness as soon as its eye no longer takes in the light, so the soul is devoid of discernment when communion with God is broken. It is in *His light*, and there alone, we "see light" (Psa. 36:9). While the glory of God be truly our aim and His Word our rule, "good judgment" will be ours, so that we shall see and avoid the snares of self-will and the pitfalls of Satan; but when the gratification of self becomes our end and carnal reason be our regulator, we shall be given up to folly, confusion and disaster.

"But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness" (Matt. 6:23). The "evil eye" is the mind or understanding of the unregenerate man, having some light of intelligence in it by nature, yet terribly blinded and darkened by the corruption of sin through our fall in Adam. That the reader may have a more definite conception of the havoc which sin has thus wrought in us, it should be pointed out that man's understanding has lost the gift of discernment and judgment in spiritual things, so that he mistakes evil for good, earthly for heavenly, things to be refused for things to be chosen. This is clear from the natural man's ignorance and blindness in the real knowledge of God. It is true that the mind of the natural man possesses some knowledge of God: he believes in His existence and professes to own His supremacy. Yet such knowledge as he possesses, though rendering him accountable to his Maker, exerts no spiritual influence upon his soul and life. Proof of this appears in the following facts.

The natural man does not realize and own in a practical way the *presence* of God, that "the eyes of the LORD are in every place, beholding the evil and the good" (Prov. 15:3): if he did, he would not, without fear and trembling, dare to commit those sins in God's sight which he is afraid and ashamed to commit before the eyes of his fellows. The natural man does not realize and own the *particular providences* of God, for in time of want and distress, when outward springs dry up, his heart is dead within him and the promise of help from man does more to cheer him than any hope he has in God. How plain it is then that he trusts more in the creature than he does in the Creator. Again—the natural man does not realize and own the *justice* of God, for he imagines that though he sins yet he shall escape punishment: by his very conduct he says, "I shall have peace though I walk in the imagination of mine heart, to add drunkenness to thirst" (Deut. 29:19). Though the natural man knows God must be worshipped, yet he is quite incapable

of discerning the right kind of worship: the vast majority bow down before idols and images, and even those who pretend to outwardly honour the true God have their hearts far from Him while engaged in such exercises (Matt. 15:8).

What lamentable proofs are these that sin has debased man, corrupted the very springs of his being, and blinded his understanding. What unmistakable and irrefutable evidences are these that the “eye” of the unregenerate is an evil one. Though blessed with rationality, though endowed with the perception that God is and that He is to be owned and worshipped, though capable of receiving intellectual instruction concerning the character and claims of God, yet such knowledge avails him nothing in a spiritual way. The unregenerate is blind to God’s glory, unaffected by His majesty, unawed by His sovereignty, unsoftened by His goodness, unable to worship Him aright or do that which is acceptable to Him. How clear it is that “the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them; because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Cor. 2:14). Before he can have any spiritual discernment or experimental acquaintance with God, before he can obtain an effectual and transforming knowledge of Him, he must be born again (1 John 5:20).

Not only does the blindness of the natural man appear in his crass ignorance of God, but also with respect to *himself*. His mind is totally lacking in spiritual discernment. This is evident from the following facts. The unregenerate are completely unaware of the awful darkness which rests upon their understandings. They deem themselves to be wise, when in the things of God they are veritable fools: “the way of peace have they not known” (Rom. 3:17). When really awakened by the Holy Spirit they are made aware of this, for their cry then is, “What must I do to be saved?” So blind is the natural man that he cannot discern aright of his own sins nor see the vileness of them: if he did, he would not continue therein as he does. He judges wrongly of his frailty and mortality: others may be cut off in youth, but not so himself; no matter how old, he still gives himself several more years. This is why we are instructed to pray, “So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psa. 90:12).

So blind is the natural man that he is incapable of discerning aright of the scope and end of his life, which is to aim at the glory of God and be a help and blessing to his fellows. But so far from this characterizing them, the unregenerate think little or nothing about these things, but seek their own praise and are a stumblingblock unto their neighbours. Nor can the natural man judge rightly of his own true happiness. So stupid and sottish is he that he measures happiness by outward things, esteeming the wealthy to be envied and the poor to be pitied. Therefore does he regard phantoms as realities and realities as phantoms, and spends his time and strength in pursuing the shadows while he misses the substance. That is why we are exhorted to set our affection “upon things above” (Col. 3:2), for by nature they are fixed upon things below. From all of this it is unmistakably evident that the eye of the natural man is an “evil” one, that sin has debased his faculties, darkened his understanding, destroyed his spiritual perception. And unless God is pleased to perform a miracle of grace upon us, “the blackness of darkness” (Jude 13) must inevitably be our portion forever.

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness” (Matt. 6:23). Here is the fruit of an evil eye: the whole man is affected. If the understanding is Divinely illumined and the aim be the glory of God, the whole soul will be rightly directed and its activities be holy—but where the mind is blinded by sin and Satan, all the faculties of the inner man are vitiated and all

his actions are evil. It is a striking fact in the natural realm that an injured optic cannot bear the light, which solemnly shadows forth the awful spiritual state of the unregenerate. They cannot endure the presence of God, nor His Word which condemns them. Their eye is evil, their judgment is blinded by love of the world, and therefore their whole life is full of disorder and unrighteousness. How can it be otherwise, when their most important faculty, which should discern between good and evil and direct accordingly, is vitiated, disabled thereunto? Thus "The way of the wicked is its darkness, they know not at what they stumble" (Prov. 4:19).

What cause is there here for humiliation and self-judgment: that by nature we are utterly unable to judge rightly either of God or of ourselves, that we have a mind which is so corrupt that it produces nothing but disorder in the whole of our life. How greatly we dread natural blindness: what horror strikes the heart when we have reason to think we are in imminent danger of being deprived of bodily vision; yet how much worse is that spiritual darkness whereby the soul is kept from God under the power of Satan! Fearful beyond words is such a state, yet the vast majority of our fellows are quite insensible of their wretched plight and indifferent when it is declared unto them. What cause for thankfulness, then, if the writer and the reader have been enabled to discover *their* blindness: in such case, how diligently should we heed that word of the great Physician, "I counsel thee to buy of Me . . . eyesalve that thou mayest see" (Rev. 3:18). We must seek from Him that enlightening of His Spirit, through the Word, for this is that "anointing" which "teacheth us all things" (1 John 2:27).

Hereby we perceive how the course of the world, in regard to the state of their minds, is to be reproved, for on every side we behold those who are quite content with an evil eye. Even those who acknowledge, in a formal way, that God is and He is to be loved and worshipped, and that we should love our neighbours as ourselves, yet they seek no further. They have nothing more than the mere light of nature, the remnants of intelligence left to them since the Fall. They are still in spiritual darkness, "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). Their life is full of darkness, and they shall yet be "cast into the Outer Darkness" unless the Lord is pleased to have mercy upon them. A natural knowledge of Divine things will save no man. The homage of our lips and the external reformation of our lives will not secure God's favour. Nothing but a new creation in Christ, being renewed in the spirit of our minds, God commanding the light to shine "in our hearts" (2 Cor. 4:6), will avail any for eternity.

Since this "evil eye" is in each of us by nature, what care we need to take lest we be wise in our own conceits, especially in matters of salvation: herein the Word of God must be our wisdom. "Ye shall not do . . . every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes . . . but all that I command you," saith the Lord (Deut. 12:8-11). It is not for the creature to say how the Creator is to be worshipped, nor for the sinner to determine how he shall be saved, yet such is their blind presumption that men will be their own masters in such things. The Jew, the Mohammedan, the Papist, has each his own different manner of worshipping God and of seeking salvation, yet though they all depart from the Truth, each is thoroughly convinced that his worship meets with the Divine acceptance and that Heaven will be his eternal home. And so it is with the majority who have been brought up among Protestants: either they rely on their own works, trust in their own faith (such is it is), or else they persuade themselves that if they repent at the last and commit their souls unto God all will be well.

Since this “evil eye” is in each of us by nature, then how earnestly we should pray for and labour after the eye of faith, by which alone we look unto the mercy of God in Christ and rest in His promises, for all things needful both in life and in death. This eye looks out of self for those supplies of grace which are lacking in natural knowledge. By means of the eye of faith we are enabled to discern aright both of God and of ourselves—His holiness and claims, our vileness and wants. By this eye we are enabled to see things afar off, to be persuaded of them, to embrace the same (Heb. 11:13). Yea, by it we are enabled to perceive things which are invisible, for “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Heb. 11:1). By it Abraham saw the Day of Christ, “and was glad” (John 8:56). This will enable us to walk in the steps of the Patriarchs unto the Heavenly City. Then let us earnestly beg God for this eye of faith, that by becoming the children of the promise we may be counted for the seed.

“If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” (Matt. 6:23). Unspeakably solemn is this. “The light that is in thee” is the light of nature, the remnants of that moral and intellectual perception with which man was originally endowed. It is that knowledge of God and that discernment of good and evil which though greatly dimmed and corrupted by the Fall has not been utterly extinguished, for the veriest atheist and the most voluptuous wretch still have some stirrings of conscience left within them, some inklings that there is a God and that he is accountable to Him. But if that remaining “light” be stifled, if no use be made of it, if its promptings be constantly resisted, if the voice of conscience be deliberately silenced until God is denied and His Word rejected as a Divine revelation, then even that “light” becomes “darkness” and its possessors are given over by God to a reprobate mind. And then “how great is that darkness!”—sin is committed greedily, without remorse; there is then nothing in that man’s life but brutish confusion and devilish actions.

“If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!” These words may also be legitimately applied unto those who are led astray by religious error and given up to fanaticism. When men deem themselves to have been extraordinarily illumined, to have received some voice or vision from Heaven which will not stand the test of Holy Writ, some fancied “baptism of the Spirit” which renders them independent of the Scriptures, supposing that this special light within is all that they need, “how great is that darkness!” Finally, there is a yet more solemn application of these words of Christ to those who have sat under a sound ministry: the light of the Truth has shone upon their minds, only to be resisted and the Spirit quenched, and how great is their darkness! “For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning” (2 Peter 2:20).

If then the very light of nature may be put out and the light of the Gospel quenched by us, how seriously we ought to *meditate upon* our vileness, for we have within us such brutish lusts and devilish desires that unless they be restrained and kept under, they will surely plunge us into the blackness of darkness forever. How the realization of this should humble us! And hereby we should be admonished to mortify our corrupt desires and unruly affections. Before the Fall, the mind ruled the will and the affections, but now the inferior faculties overrule the mind, so that they lead us into folly against our better judgment. Our only safeguard is to deny our perverse wills and corrupt desires and strive to bring them into subjection unto the Word of God. And how we need to heed that injunction: “Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil

heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb. 3:12). Then let us seek grace to embrace the Gospel, walk according to its precepts, and beg God to unite our hearts to fear His name.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

15. *On Carmel.*

So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel” (1 Kings 18:20). Let us endeavour to picture the scene. It is early morning. From all sides the eager crowds are making their way towards this spot, which from remotest times has been associated with worship. No work is being done anywhere: a single thought possesses the minds of young and old alike as they respond to their king’s summons to gather together for this mighty concourse. Behold the many thousands of Israel occupying every foot of vantage ground from which they could obtain a view of the proceedings. Were they to witness a miracle? Was an end now to be put unto their sufferings? Was the long hoped-for rain about to fall? A hush descends upon the multitude as they hear the tread of marshalled men: conspicuous with the sun-symbols flashing on their turbaned heads, sure of court favour and insolently defiant, came the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. Then, through the crowds, is carried the litter of the king, on the shoulders of his guard of honour, surrounded by his officers of state. Something like that must have been the scene presented on this auspicious occasion.

“And Elijah came unto all the people” (v. 21). Behold the sea of upturned faces as every eye is focused on this strange and stern figure, at whose word the heavens had been as brass for the last three years. With what intense interest and awe must they have gazed upon this lone man of sinewy build, with flashing eyes and compressed lips. What a solemn hush must have fallen upon that vast assembly as they beheld one man pitted against the whole company. With what malignant glances would his every movement be watched by the jealous priests and prophets. As one commentator puts it, “No tiger ever watched its victim more fiercely! If they may have their way, he will never touch yonder plain again.” As Ahab himself watched this servant of the Most High, fear and hatred must have alternated in his heart, for the king regarded Elijah as the cause of all his troubles, yet he felt that somehow the coming of rain depended upon him.

The stage was now set. The huge audience was assembled, the leading characters were about to play their parts, and one of the most dramatic acts in the whole history of Israel was about to be enacted. There was to be a public contest between the forces of good and evil. On the one side was Baal with his hundreds of prophets, on the other Jehovah and His lone servant. How great was the courage of Elijah, how strong his faith as he dared to stand alone in the cause of God against such powers and numbers. But we need not fear for the intrepid Tishbite: he needs no sympathy of ours. He was consciously standing in the presence of One to whom the nations are but as a drop in a bucket. All Heaven was behind him. Legions of angels filled that mountain, though they were invisible to the eye of sense. Though he was but a frail creature like ourselves, yet Elijah was full of faith and spiritual power, and by that faith he subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, escaped the edge of the sword, waxed valiant in fight, and turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

“Elijah stands forth before them all with a confident and majestic manner as the ambassador of Heaven. His manly spirit emboldened by the consciousness of the Divine protection, inspired with courage, and awed all opposition. But what an awful and loathsome sight presented itself to the man of God, to see such a gathering of Satan’s agents, who had withdrawn the people of Jehovah from His holy and honourable service, and had seduced them into the abominable and debasing superstitions of the Devil! Elijah was not of a kindred spirit with those who can see with

composure their God insulted, their fellow-countrymen degrading themselves at the instigation of wily men, and destroying their immortal souls through the gross impositions practiced upon them. He could not look with a placid eye upon the four hundred and fifty vile impostors, who made it their business, for filthy lucre or for courtly favour, to delude the ignorant multitude to their eternal destruction. He looked upon idolatry as a crying shame: as nothing better than evil personified, the Devil deified, and Hell formed into a religious establishment; and he would regard the abettors of the diabolical system with abhorrence” (John Simpson).

It seems reasonable to conclude that Ahab and his assembled subjects would expect Elijah on this occasion to pray for rain, and that they would now witness the sudden end of the long drought and its attendant famine. Had not the three years of which he had prophesied (1 Kings 17:1) run their weary course? Was mourning and suffering now to give place to joy and plenty again? Ah, but there was something else besides praying that the windows of Heaven might be opened, something of much greater importance which must first be attended to. Neither Ahab nor his subjects were yet in any fit state of soul to be made the recipients of His blessings and mercies. God had been dealing with them in judgment for their awful sins, and thus far His rod had not been acknowledged nor had the occasion of His displeasure been removed. As Matthew Henry pointed out, “God will first prepare our hearts, and then cause His ear to hear: will first turn us to Him, and then turn to us (see Psa. 10:17). Deserters must not look for God’s favours till they return to their allegiance.”

“And Elijah came unto all the people, and said.” The servant of God at once took the initiative, being in complete command of the situation. It is unspeakably solemn to note that he said not a single word to the false prophets, making no attempt to convert *them*. They were devoted to destruction (1 Kings 18:40). No, instead he addressed himself to the people, of whom there was some hope, saying, “How long halt ye between two opinions?” (v. 21). The word for “halt” is *totter*: they were not walking uprightly. Sometimes they tottered over to the side of the God of Israel, and then they lurched like an intoxicated person over onto the side of the false gods. They were not fully decided which to follow. They dreaded Jehovah, and therefore would not totally abandon Him; they desired to curry favour with the king and queen, and so felt they must embrace the religion of the State. Their conscience forbade them to do the former, their fear of man persuaded them to do the latter; but in neither were they heartily engaged. Thus Elijah upbraided them with their inconstancy and fickleness.

Elijah made a demand *for definite decision*. It is to be borne in mind that *Jehovah* was the name by which the God of the Israelites had always been distinguished since their coming out of Egypt. Indeed, the Jehovah-God of their fathers was the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (Exo. 3:15, 16). “Jehovah” signifies the self-existent, omnipotent, immutable, and Eternal Being, the only God, beside whom there is none else. “If Jehovah be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him.” There was no “if” in the mind of the Prophet: he knew full well that Jehovah was the one true and living God, but the people must be shown the untenability and absurdity of their vacillation. Religions which are diametrically opposed cannot both be right: one must be wrong, and as soon as the true is discovered, the false must be cast to the winds. The present-day application of Elijah’s demand would be this: if the Christ of Scripture be the true Saviour, then surrender to Him; if the christ of modern Christendom, then follow him. One who demands the *denying* of self, and another who allows the *gratifying* of self, cannot both be right. One who insists

on separation from the world, and another who permits you to enjoy its friendship, cannot both be right. One who requires the uncompromising mortification of sin, and another who suffers you to trifle with it, cannot both be the Christ of God.

There were times when those Israelites attempted to serve both God and Baal. They had some knowledge of Jehovah, but Jezebel with her host of false prophets had unsettled their minds. The example of the king misled them and his influence corrupted them. The worship of Baal was popular and his prophets feted; the worship of Jehovah was discountenanced and His servants put to death. This made the people in general to conceal any regard they had for the Lord. It induced them to join in the idolatrous worship in order to escape ill will and persecution. Consequently they halted between the two parties. They were like lame persons: unsteady, limping up and down. They oscillated in their sentiments and conduct. They thought so to accommodate themselves to both parties as to please and secure the favour of both. There was no evenness in their walk, no steadiness in their principles, no consistency in their conduct. Thus they both dishonoured God and debased themselves by this mongrel kind of religion, wherein they “feared the LORD, and served their own gods” (2 Kings 17:33). But God will not accept a divided heart: He will have *all* or none.

The Lord is a jealous God, demanding our whole affection and will not accept a divided empire with Baal. You must be for Him or against Him. He will permit of no compromise. You must *declare yourself*. When Moses saw the people of Israel dancing around the golden calf, after destroying the idol and rebuking Aaron, he stood in the gate of the camp and said, “Who is on the Lord’s side? let him come unto me” (Exo. 32:26). O my reader, if you have not already done so, resolve with godly Joshua, “But as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (24:15). Ponder those solemn words of Christ’s, “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth abroad” (Matt. 12:30). Nothing is so repulsive to Him as the lukewarm professor: “I would thou wert cold or hot” (Rev. 3:15)—one thing or the other. He has plainly warned us that “no man can serve two masters.” Then “How long halt ye between two opinions?” Come to some decision one way or the other, for there can be no compromise between Christ and Belial.

There are some who have been brought up under the protection and sanctifying influence of a godly home. Later, they go out into the world, and are apt to be dazzled by its glittering tinsel and carried away by its apparent happiness. Their foolish hearts hanker after its attractions and pleasures. They are invited to participate, and are sneered at if they hesitate. And only too often, because they have not grace in their hearts, nor strength of mind to withstand the temptations, they are drawn aside, heeding the counsel of the ungodly and standing in the way of sinners. True, they cannot altogether forget their early training, and at times an uneasy conscience will move them to read a chapter out of the Bible and to say their prayers; and so they halt between two alternatives and vainly attempt to serve two masters. They will not cleave to God alone, relinquish all for Him, and follow Him with undivided hearts. They are halters, borderers, who love and follow the world, and yet retain something of the form of godliness.

There are others who cling to an orthodox creed, yet enter into the gaities of the world and freely indulge the lusts of the flesh. “They profess that they know God, but in works they deny Him” (Titus 1:15). They attend religious services regularly, posing as worshippers of God through the one Mediator and claiming to be indwelt by that Spirit through whose gracious op-

erations the people of God are enabled to turn from sin and to walk in the paths of righteousness and true holiness. But if you entered their homes, you would soon have reason to doubt their pretensions. You would find no worship of God in their family circle, perhaps none, or at best a mere formal worship in their closets: you would hear nothing about God or His claims in their daily conversation, and see nothing in their conduct to distinguish them from respectable worldlings; yea, you would behold some things which the more decent non-professors would be ashamed of. There is such a lack of integrity and consistency in their characters as renders them offensive to God and contemptible in the eyes of men of understanding.

There are yet others who must also be classed among those who halt and hesitate, being inconstant in their position and practice. This is a less numerous class, who have been brought up in the world, amid its follies and vanities. But by affliction, the preaching of God's Word or some other means, they have been made sensible that they must turn to the Lord and serve *Him* if they are to escape the wrath to come and lay hold on eternal life. They have become dissatisfied with their worldly life, yet, being surrounded with worldly friends and relatives, they are afraid of altering their line of conduct, lest they should give offense to their godless companions and bring down upon them their scoffs and opposition. Hence they make sinful compromises, trying to conceal their better convictions but neglecting many of God's claims upon them. Thus they halt between two opinions: what God will think of them, and what the world will think of them. They have not that firm reliance on the Lord which will lead them to break from His enemies and be out and out for Him.

There is one other class which we must mention, who, though they differ very radically from those which we have described above, yet must be regarded as proper subjects to ask, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" While they are certainly to be pitied, yet they must be reprov'd. We refer to those who know that the Lord is to be loved and served with all the heart and in all that He commands, but for some reason or other they fail to avow themselves openly on His side. They are outwardly separated from the world, taking no part in its empty pleasures, and none can point to anything in their conduct which is contrary to the Scriptures. They honour the Sabbath Day, attend regularly the means of grace, and like to be in the company of God's people. Yet they do not publicly take their place among the followers of Christ and sit down at His table. Either they feel too unworthy to do so, or fear they might bring some reproach on His cause. But such weakness and inconsistency is wrong. If the Lord be God, follow Him as He bids, and trust Him for all needed grace.

"If Jehovah be God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him." The "double minded man is unstable in all his ways" (James 1:8). We must be as decided in our practice as in our opinion or belief, otherwise—no matter how orthodox our creed—our profession is *worthless*. It is very evident there could not be two supreme Gods, and therefore Elijah called upon the people to make up their minds which was really God; and as they could not possibly serve two masters, let them give their whole hearts and undivided energies to that Being whom they concluded to be the true and living God. And this is what the Holy Spirit is saying to you, my unsaved reader: weigh the one against the Other—the idol you have been giving your affections unto and He whom you have slighted; and if you are assured that the Lord Jesus Christ be "the true God" (1 John 5:20), then choose Him as your portion, surrender to Him as your Lord, cleave to Him as your All in all. The Redeemer will not be served by halves or with reserves.

“And the people answered him not a word” (1 Kings 18:21): either because they were unwilling to acknowledge their guilt, and thereby offend Ahab; or because they were unable to refute Elijah, and so were ashamed of themselves. They did not know what to say. Whether convicted or confused, we know not; but certainly they were confounded—incapable of finding an error in the Prophet’s reasoning. They seem to have been stunned that such alternatives should be presented to their choice, but they were neither honest enough to own their folly nor bold enough to say they had acted in compliance with the king’s command, following a multitude to do evil. They therefore sought refuge in silence, which is to be much preferred to the frivolous excuses proffered by most of such people today when they are rebuked for their evil ways. There can be little doubt but what they were awed by the searching questions of the Prophet.

“And the people answered him not a word.” O for that plain and faithful preaching which would so reveal to men the unreasonableness of their position, which would so expose their hypocrisy, so sweep away the cobwebs of their sophistry, which would so arraign them at the bar of their own consciences that their every objection would be silenced, and they would stand self-condemned. Alas, on every side we behold those who are seeking to serve both God and mammon, attempting to win the smile of the world and to earn the “well done” of Christ. Like Jonathan of old, they wish to retain their standing in Saul’s palace and yet keep in with David. And how many professing Christians there are in these days who can hear Christ and His people reviled, and never open their mouths in reprimand—afraid to stand up boldly for God, ashamed of Christ and His cause, though their consciences approve of the very things for which they hear the Lord’s people criticized. O guilty silence, which is likely to meet with a silent Heaven when they are pleased to cry for mercy.

“Then said Elijah unto the people I, even I only remain a Prophet of the Lord; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men. Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under. And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of Jehovah: and the God that answereth by fire, let Him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken” (vv. 22-24). This was an eminently fair challenge, because Baal was supposed to be the fire god, or lord of the sun. Elijah gave the false prophets the preference, so that the outcome of the contest might be the more conspicuous to the glory of God. The proposal was so reasonable that the people at once assented to it, which forced their seducers out into the open: they must either comply with the challenge or acknowledge that Baal was an impostor.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF MAN'S IMPOTENCY.

6. *Its Problem.*

Last month we quoted from a series of "Meditations on the Preceptive Part of the Word of God" from the pen of the late J. C. Philpot, in which he showed at length the "Importance" of this branch of the Truth. He called attention to "its bulk" or the large place given to precepts in the Scriptures; he pointed out that if we had them not, "we should be without an inspired rule of life, without an authoritative guide for our walk and conduct," and therefore "should not be able to live to God's glory." He also showed that "on its fulfillment turns the main test of distinction between the believer and the unbeliever." It would indeed be a grand thing if present-day preachers in the "Gospel Standard" branch of the Baptist churches (and their brethren in the U.S.A. who are known as Primitive Baptists) could be induced to give careful attention to such weighty considerations, and *act* on them. It has long been our conviction that the repudiation of the Moral Law as the believer's rule of life and the sinful ignoring of the Divine precepts in the pulpit, have contributed more than anything else unto the terribly low condition to which these denominations have been reduced.

Some time ago we expressed this conviction to a friend in America who belongs to the hyper-Calvinists, and he replied by saying, "I will take to heart what you wrote me concerning the Primitive Baptists as regards the general attitude of their churches to not preaching and insisting on the observance of Gospel precepts: it is causing an awful dearth in the churches." That Mr. Philpot himself was conscious of this grievous neglect in his day is clear from his "Address to Our Spiritual Readers" in January, 1865, when he said, "Where is the preceptive part of the Gospel brought forward and insisted upon as we find it in the Epistles of the New Testament? And are not churches as faulty, in some of these respects, as ministers? How many of our Baptist churches can 'suffer the Word of exhortation' (Heb. 13:22)? What an outcry there would be of 'legality' if any minister of truth were to exhort husbands, wives, children, masters and servants, severally and specially as Paul exhorts them!" (p. 8). What a tragic state of affairs! What sort of "churches" are they which will not suffer an essential and copious part of God's Word!

Later in these same "Meditations" Mr. Philpot said: "How anyone who calls himself a believer in Christ Jesus can think lightly of knowing and doing the will of God, is indeed a mystery. But this all must do who ignore the precepts, think lightly of them, and neglect them. It is almost become a tradition in some churches, professing the doctrines of grace, to disregard the precepts and pass them by in a kind of general silence, and thus in a sense they 'have made the Commandments of God of none effect by their tradition' " (p. 319). Yet there was no need to tone down his indictment and minimize the gravity of such a sin by saying those guilty of the same "*in a sense* have made the commandments of God of none effect," for this is the very thing that they *have done*, so that their preachers are positively afraid to deliver an hortatory sermon lest they be frowned upon.

As to how far *his own* almost entire silence on the Precepts influenced and intimidated other ministers, only that Day will show. Mr. Philpot gave a twofold explanation of his lamentable failure at this point. "But are there no reasons for this omission? Surely there are, or it would not be so general. Have we not ourselves been guilty here? We freely confess our fault this day, and perhaps we have but to look into our own breast to find why others have been faulty too. Now we confess that for some years after we had received the love of the truth we did not clearly

or fully *see the connection* of the precepts with the doctrines of grace and the experience of the saints. We saw, what was obvious enough, that the precepts occupied a large and prominent place in the New Testament, and as such we received it. But two difficulties seemed to stand in the way of its cordial and hearty reception, and a right view of its beauty and blessedness as a part of Divine revelation. These were, 1, the sinfulness; 2, the inability of the creature, and of ourselves in particular. The consciousness of utter inability to perform the precepts made it as if too inaccessible to the hand to reach it; the holiness of the precept made it as if too pure for the hand to touch it.

“Thus, if passed by, it was not from contempt, but reverence: if not handled, it was not from willful neglect, but from not properly *seeing its place* in the Gospel of the grace of God . . . Thus there was a going to the opposite extreme; and to avoid one evil, there was not a falling into, but too near an approach to the other. Repelled and almost disgusted by the way in which Arminians, moderate Calvinists, and the whole race of man-made preachers handled the invitations and precepts of the Gospel, handing them out to dead men to act upon, and perform, there was a shrinking from any confederacy with such doings and dealings” (pp. 65-67). It is very likely that the Day will show there were as many “man-made” preachers among the ultra-Calvinists as among the Arminians and moderate Calvinists. In the words we have italicized in the above quotations the real reason for Mr. Philpot’s shelving of the Divine precepts is betrayed: *proud reason* was at work, refusing to receive as a little child what seemed to him inconsistent with other things in the Word. Nor was Mr. P. by any means alone in this, for he was merely following in the steps of Mr. Gadsby, and of Mr. Huntington before him—a path much trodden, before and since by Antinomians.

What difference does it make whether or not we can “clearly or fully see the connection of the precepts with the doctrines of grace and the experience of the saints”? Is the intellectual perspicuity of the preacher to be that which governs him in picking and choosing from the Word of God? Is his theological bias to decide which branches of Truth he should handle and which he should ignore? Is he to discard the Moral Law because he is unable to see how its requirements are in perfect accord with the contents of the Gospel? Shall he jettison all the Old Testament types because he cannot perceive they now have any value, seeing the Substance is come? Is he to be silent upon the eternal punishment of the wicked because he cannot reconcile such a thing with the everlasting mercy of God? The bounden duty of every Divinely-called minister is to declare “*all the Counsel of God,*” no matter how much of it he fails to comprehend, and to keep back “*nothing that is profitable*” for his hearers, no matter how they may rebel against it.

Towards the end of his “Meditations” Mr. Philpot intimated one other reason some ministers are likely to shelve the exhortations of Holy Writ. “Besides which, look at the inconsistency of a man preaching the precepts who himself does not practice it, nor even know under what power and influence it should be performed. Consider the contradiction of a covetous man preaching up liberality; or a worldly professor inculcating, ‘Love not the world’; of an unforgiving persecutor admonishing to forgiveness; of a light, trifling preacher, full of jests and jokes and foolish anecdotes, exhorting young men (much more gray-haired ministers) to be sober-minded, for all to put away foolish talking and jesting, and that their speech should be always seasoned with salt, that it may minister grace unto the hearer. Such men instinctively feel that their hearers would despise, and that justly, such preaching and such preachers. They, therefore, quietly drop, not only

the precept itself, as condemning their own conduct, but all attention to it, and ignore it just as much as if it had neither part nor place in the Word of Truth. And as many, if not most, of such men's hearers are in precisely the same state, as unwilling to hear the precept enforced and as unable to bear it as their ministers, need we wonder that there should be a silent compact between the pulpit and the pew that the subject should never be introduced at all, and that all mention of it or allusion to it should be considered legal and inconsistent with the doctrines of grace? The consequences of this silent compact may be easily read in the state of many churches professing doctrinal truth—that they are flooded with carnal professors, who think no more of the precepts of the Gospel than of an old almanac, and that even among those who are partakers of the grace of life, vital godliness is, for the most part, at a very low ebb” (p. 323).

That there is some force in the above remarks every true servant of Christ will readily allow, but that they furnish the slightest extenuation for dereliction of duty, *no godly man* will admit for a moment. One of the most painful trials experienced by a godly minister is the consciousness he has of his utter unworthiness for such a high and honourable calling, his personal unfitness to handle the holy things of God, so that he is frequently constrained to cry with the Prophet, “Woe is me! for I am undone: because I am a man of unclean lips” (Isa. 6:5). None but He who knows the heart is aware of how often the servant of God walks down the pulpit-steps feeling that the message he has just delivered *condemns himself*, and instead of making for the entrance of the building to greet the retiring worshippers with a smiling face and a handshake (as the custom now is in so many places) he wants to retire to the vestry and there hang his head in shame before his Master.

It is no easy task for one who feels the Lord has hid His face from him to discourse on the blessedness of communion with the Beloved. It is no easy task for one who is bowed down from a sense of the plague of his own heart to preach upon the duty of delighting ourselves in the Lord and rejoicing in Him evermore. Each man has his own besetting sin to mourn over, and it is no easy matter for one who is conscientious to stand up and denounce that particular evil and exhort unto the opposite virtue. Hypocrisy is particularly hateful to an honest soul, yet to bid others to perform what one knows he is not himself doing, certainly seems a being guilty of two-facedness. Nevertheless, we must not lower *God's standard* to meet human frailties nor omit either what we cannot understand or fail to practice. It is at the heart God looks, and if that beats true to Him with a genuine desire to please Him, He accepts the will for the deed.

The duty of the preacher is clear. “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression” (Isa. 58:1)—no matter how unpopular it may make him. “Thou therefore gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them” (Jer. 1:17): yes, “all,” not simply those parts which we think we understand. “Speak unto all the cities of Judah which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; *diminish not a word*” (Jer. 26:2)—woe be unto him who deliberately omits what is unpalatable unto himself or his hearers. “Tell them, thus saith the LORD: whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear” (Ezek. 3:11): faithfully preach the whole counsel of God and leave “results” to Him. “Go unto Nineveh, that great city, and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee” (Jonah 3:2), and take to heart the judgment which came upon that Prophet because he *refused* to call upon the unregenerate to repent.

Most of our readers will not be surprised to hear that among much which is excellent in the articles from which we have quoted, Mr. Philpot was guilty of a grave error concerning the Gospel precepts by blankly denying that they applied to the unregenerate. In his second main division, "The *Nature of the Precepts*," under the "letter" of it, he deals with "the persons to whom the precept *is addressed*," and says, "These are believers, and believers only. The world has nothing to do with the precepts of the Gospel, they are not addressed to it or meant for it. This will be evident from a moment's consideration. Where do we chiefly find the precepts of the New Testament? In the Epistles. What are the Epistles? Inspired letters written to churches or Christian individuals . . . But what an important consequence flows from this simple fact, that spiritual precepts are only for spiritual men, and therefore that to take the precepts and force them upon carnal men is to abuse them" (p. 117).

But many *will not* deem it to be so "evident from a moment's consideration" that the world has nothing to do with the Gospel precepts. First, they will wonder why the whole of the Old Testament is so naively ignored. Are there not hundreds of spiritual precepts found in it? Were they addressed only to spiritual persons? We think not. Further, do we "chiefly find the precepts of the New Testament in the Epistles"? Though it be allowed that the majority of them are in the Epistles, nevertheless, there are dozens more recorded in the Gospels and the Acts—and they were not by any means restricted to spiritual men. Did the Son of God err in bidding the unregenerate to repent and believe the Gospel? Did the Spirit-filled and controlled Apostles make a serious blunder in indiscriminately calling upon the multitude to perform spiritual acts? And where is there a word in the New Testament which declares that their example was not to be followed by later ministers of the Word? We require someone vested with a far higher authority than that asserted by Messrs. Huntington, Gadsby and Philpot to assure us that such is not the case.

It is just because there is a half-truth in the contention made by Mr. Philpot in our last quotation that it is the more misleading and dangerous. It is freely allowed that there are many exhortations recorded in the Epistles which are *not* to be pressed upon unbelievers, yet this is not because unbelievers are unfit subjects to receive spiritual exhortations, but because many of the precepts addressed unto the saints are unsuited to the world. We also readily grant that much harm has been done by those who have failed to distinguish between things which differ radically. For example, Paul's call to the saints at Philippi, "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12) is quite unsuited to those who reject the yoke of Christ. And why so? Not on the ground of the worldling's spiritual impotency, but because he is not a possessor of any "salvation" to work out. In like manner, it would be useless to bid him "*add to your faith virtue, etc.*" for he is utterly devoid of the faith there mentioned.

Nevertheless, it is equally important to recognize that there are many exhortations in the Epistles which may justly be pressed upon the unconverted, though, of course they cannot be enforced by the same motives which are there advanced. Surely it is the duty of God's servant to exhort all to, "abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul," though he cannot urge the ungodly to do so on the ground that they are "strangers and pilgrims" (1 Peter 2:11). "Fear God, honour the king" (1 Peter 2:17) is just as binding on worldlings as it is on Christians. "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute, custom to whom custom, fear to whom fear, honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another: for he that loveth an-

other hath fulfilled the law” (Rom. 13:7, 8). These also are exhortations found in the Epistles, nevertheless their scope must certainly not be restricted unto the regenerate. To argue that the calling upon the wicked to perform spiritual duties implies their ability to do so, is utterly pointless, for it might as well be objected that Christians themselves should not be exhorted for the same reason, for they have no power of themselves to comply (John 15:5).

The plain fact of the matter is that if the servant of God today has no Divine warrant to call upon the *ungodly* to forsake their sins and turn to Christ for pardon and peace, then he also has no authority to exhort believers to walk in the paths of righteousness, for they both rest upon the *same* foundation, namely, the precedents furnished by Holy Writ. The Christian has no more ability of his own to heed the precepts found in the Epistles, than the non-Christian has to obey the calls which are found in the Gospels and the Acts. It is the bounden obligation of those claiming to be called of God to preach, to exhort unbelievers *and* believers, realizing that it rests entirely in the hands of a sovereign God to make effectual the one or the other, or both. He has no right whatever to pick and choose: his business is to “declare all the counsel of God,” and as Luke 24:47 and Acts 20:21 show, part of that “counsel” is to call upon men to *repent*.

If the ungodly are not pointedly and authoritatively called unto repentance of their sins and belief of the Gospel, and if on the contrary they are only told that they are unable so to do, then they are encouraged in their impenitency and unbelief. If the Gospel gives such a disproportionate presentation of the Truth that the unconverted are made to feel they are more to be pitied than blamed for their spiritual impotency, then their responsibility is undermined and their conscience is lulled to sleep. Unto the objection that to call upon the unregenerate to turn from the world and come to Christ is to inculcate creature ability and to feed self-righteousness, we ask, Were Christ and His Spirit-taught Apostles ignorant of this danger? Was it left for the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to make such a discovery? Were men so mightily used of God as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and C. H. Spurgeon wrong, when, in promiscuously exhorting all their hearers to flee from the wrath to come, they followed the example of John the Baptist and the Son of God?

We realize that many will find little that is edifying in this article, yet we ask them to kindly bear with us, as we feel strongly that quite a number of our readers are in real need of what has been presented. And now to sum up—the principal problem which the moral impotency of the sinner presents to the minds of men is, How can one who is helpless be a suitable subject for exhortations unto action? Instead of seeking to untie this knot, the majority of theologians and preachers have summarily cut it. Arminians have denied that fallen man is totally helpless; Antinomians deny that he *should be* called upon to repent and believe the Gospel. Only real Calvinists have held firmly to both the inability and the responsibility of the unregenerate. In the articles which follow we shall (D.V.) endeavour to turn the light of Scripture on this problem.—A.W.P.

THE REST OF CHRIST.

“Come unto Me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). In his most excellent sermons on these words and the verses which follow, John Newton pointed out that the dispensation of the Gospel may be compared to the cities of refuge in Israel. It was a privilege and honour to the nation in general that they had such sanctuaries of Divine appointment, but the real value of them was known and felt by only a few. Those alone who found themselves in that case for which they were provided could rightly prize them.

Thus it is with the Gospel of Christ: it is the highest privilege and honour of which a professing nation can boast, but it can be truly understood and esteemed by none except weary and heavy laden souls, who have felt their misery by nature, are tired of the drudgery of sin, and have seen the broken Law pursuing them like the avenger of blood of old. This is the only consideration which keeps them from sinking into abject despair, in that God has graciously provided a remedy by the Gospel and that Christ bids them “Come unto Me, and I will give you rest.”

If those awakened, convicted, and distressed souls would but appropriate to themselves the full comfort of that blessed invitation and heartily obey its terms, their complaints would be at an end; but remaining ignorance, the workings of unbelief, and the oppositions of Satan combine in various ways to keep them back. Some will say, Alas, I am not qualified *to come* to Christ: my heart is so hard, my conscience so insensible that I do not feel the burden of my sin as I ought to nor my need of Christ’s rest as I should. Others will say, I fear that I do not come aright. I see from the Scriptures and hear from the pulpit that repentance is required from me and that faith is an absolute essential if I am to be saved, but I am much concerned to know whether my repentance be sincere and deep enough and whether my faith be anything better than an historical one—the assent of the mind to the facts presented in the Gospel.

Let us then add a few words to what we have said previously on what is meant by a saving coming to Christ. It was pointed out in an earlier article that we may discover from the cases of those who sought *bodily healing* from Him of old what is connoted by the invitation which Christ here makes to those who have sought diligently to secure the approbation of God and meet His just requirements in the Law, who are heavy laden by a sense of their wretched failures and weighted down by the conscious load of their guilt and pollution. First, they were persuaded of His power and willingness and of their own deep need of His help. Thus it is in the matter of salvation: the sinner must be convinced that Christ is “mighty to save,” that He is ready to receive all who are sick of sin and desire to be healed by Him. Second, they made an application unto Him. They were not content to hear of His fame, but made proof for themselves of His wonder-working power. So, too, the sinner must not only credit the blessed message of the Gospel, but he must also venture on Christ for himself, seek unto Him and trust in Him.

As we peruse the Gospel Narratives we see that those who sought unto Christ as a Physician of souls *continued with Him* and became His followers. They received Him as their Lord and Master, renounced everything that was inconsistent with His will (Luke 9:23, 60), professed an obedience to His precepts, and accepted a share in His reproach. Some had a more definite and open call to Him, as Matthew, who was sitting at the seat of custom, indifferent to the claims of Christ till He passed by and said, “Follow Me” (Matt. 9:9). That word was accompanied with power and won his heart, separating him from worldly pursuits in an instant. But others were drawn to Him more secretly by His Spirit and Providence, as Nathanael (John 1:46), and the

weeping penitent (Luke 7:38). In the case of the ruler who came to the Lord Jesus with no other intention than to obtain the life of his son (John 4:53), he secured much more than he asked or expected—the Lord affording such an affecting sense of His power and goodness that he, from henceforth, believed with all his house.

Now all these things are recorded for our encouragement today. The Lord Jesus is no longer here on earth in visible form but He has promised His spiritual presence to abide with His Word, His ministers and His people to the end of time. Weary and heavy laden souls—sin-sick and conscious-burdened sinners—do not have to take a long and hard journey in order to seek and find the Saviour, for He is always near to them (Acts 17:27) in a spiritual manner wherever His Gospel is preached. “But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise: Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into Heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above): or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead). But what saith it? The Word is *nigh thee*, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the Word of Faith, which we preach” (Rom. 10:6-8). Then raise your hearts, breathe forth your complaints to Him. If you feel that you cannot come to Christ *with* a tender heart and burdened conscience, then come to Him *for* them. If you fear your repentance and faith are defective, then beg Him to bestow upon you the genuine article.

“Is it a sense of your load which makes you say you are not able? Then consider that this is not a work, but a rest. Would a man plead I am so heavy laden that I cannot consent to part with my burden; so weary that I am not able either to stand still or to lie down, but must force myself farther? The greatness of your burden, so far from being an objection, is the very reason why you should instantly come to Christ, for He alone is able to release you. But perhaps you think you do not come aright. I ask, how would you come? If you come as a helpless unworthy sinner, without righteousness, without any hope but what arises from the worth, work, and Word of Christ, *this is* to come aright. There is no other way of being accepted. Would you refresh and strengthen yourself, wash away your own sins, free yourself from your burden, and then come to Him to do these things for you? May the Lord help you to see the folly and unreasonableness of your unbelief” (John Newton).

Persevere in your application to Christ. There is no promise recorded in Scripture that God will reward the careless, half-hearted, indolent seeker, but He has declared, “Ye shall seek Me and find Me when ye shall search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13). He has a fixed time for everyone whom He receives. He knew how long the poor man had waited at the side of the pool (John 5:6), and when his hour came He spake and relieved him. So do you endeavour to be found in the way: where His Word is faithfully preached, and if that be not available (or even if it is) diligently search His Word in the privacy of your own room. Be much in secret prayer. As you have opportunity converse with His people, perhaps He may unexpectedly join you, as He did the two disciples when walking to Emmaus, and cause your heart to burn within you. These are the means which the Lord has appointed. You will find many things both from within and without to discourage and weary you, but in good time, if you seek with all your heart, You shall find rest unto your soul.

“I will give you rest.” What a claim to make! This was something which no mere man, no matter how godly and spiritual, could promise. Abraham, Moses, David could not have bidden the weary and heavy laden to come unto him with the assurance that *they* would give them rest!

To impart rest of soul to another lies beyond the power of the most exalted creature. Even the holy angels in Heaven are quite incapable of bestowing rest upon others, for they are entirely dependent upon the grace of God for their own rest. How this promise of Christ, then, makes manifest His uniqueness. Neither Confucius, Buddha, nor Mohammed ever made such a claim as this. Ah, my reader, it was no mere Man who uttered these words: "Come unto Me all ye that art weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Though appearing in the form of a Servant, yet was He, in Himself, infinitely more than that. He was the Son of God incarnate. He was Himself the Creator of man, and therefore could He restore him. He was the Prince of peace and therefore capable of giving rest.

As Christ is the only One who can bestow rest of soul, so there is no true rest to be found *apart from Him*. The creature cannot impart it. The world cannot communicate it. We ourselves cannot, by any efforts of our own, manufacture it. One of the most pathetic things in this world is to behold the unregenerate vainly seeking happiness and contentment in the things of time and sense, and when it is at last discovered that these are all broken cisterns which hold no water, to observe them turning to priests and preachers, penance and fastings, reading and praying, only to find as the prodigal son did when he "began to want," that "no man gave unto him" (Luke 15). Like the poor woman mentioned in Mark 5, who had "suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse" (v. 26). Of all the unregenerate, illiterate or learned, it is true that "the way of peace have they not known" (Rom. 3:17).

Ah, my reader, it is much to be thankful for when we are made to realize experimentally that none but Christ can do helpless sinners any good. This is a hard lesson for flesh and blood, and slow are we to learn it. Not that the fact is involved or intricate in itself, but because the devilish pride of our hearts makes us self-assertive and self-sufficient until Divine grace humbles us. This is part of the gracious work of the Holy Spirit to bring us off from all *creature* dependence, to knock all props from under us, to make us perceive that the Lord Jesus Christ is our only hope. "Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Strikingly was this adumbrated of old in the dove sent forth by Noah: "But the dove found *no rest* for the sole of her foot, and she returned unto him into the ark; for the waters were on the face of the whole earth. When he put forth his hand, and took her, and pulled her in unto him into the ark" (Gen. 8:9). Significantly enough the very name "Noah" meant *rest* (Gen. 5:29, margin), and it was only as the poor dove was "*caused* to come unto him" that she obtained rest. Thus it is with the sinner.

We must now inquire, What is the nature of this "rest" which Christ gives to all who come to Him? "The Greek word expresses something more than rest, or a mere relaxation from toil; it denotes refreshment likewise. A person weary with long bearing a heavy burden will need not only to have it removed, but likewise he wants food and refreshment to restore his spirits and to repair his wasted strength. Such is the rest of the Gospel. It not only puts a period to our fruitless labour, but it affords a sweet reviving cordial. There is not only peace, but joy in believing" (John Newton). Thus it is a *spiritual* rest, a satisfying rest, "rest for the soul" as the Saviour declares later in this passage. It is such a rest as this world can neither give nor take away.

In particularizing upon the nature of this rest we may distinguish between its present and its future forms. Concerning the former we would note, first, it is a deliverance from *that vain and*

wearisome quest which engages and absorbs the sinner before the Spirit of God opens his eyes to see his folly and moves him to seek after the true riches. Piteous indeed is it to behold those who are made for eternity wasting their time and energies wandering from object to object searching for that which will satisfy them not, only to be mortified by repeated and incessant disappointments. And thus it is with all until they come to Christ, for He has written over all the pursuits and pleasures of this world, "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again" (John 4:13). Forcibly was that fact exemplified by the case of Solomon, who was provided with everything which the carnal heart could desire and who gratified his lusts to the full, only to find that, "behold, all is vanity and vexation of spirit" (Eccl. 1:14). It is from this vexation of spirit that Christ delivers His people, for He declares "whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst" (John 4:14).

Second, it is the easing and *tranquilizing of a burdened conscience*. Only one who has been enlightened and convicted by the Holy Spirit can appreciate what this means. When one is made to cry out, "The arrows of the Almighty are within me, the poison whereof drinketh up my spirit: the terrors of God do set themselves in array against me" (Job 6:4): when the curse of God's broken Law thunders in our ears, when we have an inward sense of Divine wrath, when the terrors of a future judgment and of eternal damnation fall upon the soul, then is there an indescribable anguish of mind. When a true Law-work is wrought in the heart by the Spirit we are made to exclaim, "Thine arrows stick fast in me, and Thy hand presseth me sore. There is no soundness in my flesh because of Thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin" (Psa. 38:2, 3). So, too, when we first perceive the wondrous love of God for us and His abounding goodness unto us, and how vilely we have repaid Him: then we are cut to the quick and "a wounded spirit who can bear"! But when by faith we come to Christ all this is altered. As we view Him dying in our place and perceive that there is now no condemnation for us, the intolerable load falls from our conscience and a peace which passes all understanding becomes our portion.

Third, it is a rest from the *dominion and power of sin*. Here again it is only those who have been made the subjects of a work of grace that can enter into what is meant by this. The unawakened are utterly unconcerned about the glory of God, indifferent whether their conduct pleases or displeases Him. They have no concept of the exceeding sinfulness of sin and no realization of how completely sin dominates them at all times. It is only when the Spirit of God illumines their minds and convicts their consciences that they begin to see the awfulness of their state; and only then, as they endeavour to reform their ways, are they made conscious of the might of their inward foe and of their own inability to cope with it. In vain is deliverance sought from resolutions and endeavours in our own strength. Even after we are quickened and begin to understand the Gospel salvation, for a season (often a lengthy one) it is rather a fight than a rest. But as we grow more out of ourselves and are taught to live upon Christ as our sanctification, drawing our strength and motives from Him by faith, we obtain a comparative rest, by His grace, in this respect also.

Fourth, there is a resting from *our own works*. As the believer realizes more clearly the sufficiency of the finished work of Christ, that his Surety offered unto God a perfect satisfaction on his behalf which met every claim upon him, as he perceives by faith that Christ is "the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom. 10:4), he is delivered experimentally

from the law as a Covenant of Works and sees that he no longer owes it service in that sense. His obedience is no more legal but *evangelical*, no longer rendered out of fear but from *gratitude*. His service unto the Lord is performed not in a servile but in a gracious spirit, and what was formerly a burden is now a delight. He is no longer seeking to earn God's favour, but acts in the realization that the smile of God is upon him. So far from rendering him careless, this will spur him on to strive with might and main to glorify the One who gave His own Son to be a sacrifice in his place. Thus, bondage gives place to liberty, slavery to worship, toil to rest, and the soul is enabled to repose on the unchangeable Word of Christ and to follow Him steadily through light and darkness.

There is also a *future rest* beyond any that can be experienced here, though most inadequate are our best conceptions of the glory awaiting the people of God. First, in Heaven there shall be a perfect resting *from all sin*, for nothing shall ever enter there which could either defile or disturb our peace. What it will mean to be delivered from indwelling corruptions no mortal tongue can tell. The plague of their hearts is an occasion of constant grief to the saints as long as they are left in this wilderness of sin, a burden under which they groan and from which they long to be delivered. The closer a believer's walk with the Lord and the more intimate his communion with Him, the more bitterly he bewails that within him which is ever fighting against his endeavours after holiness. Therefore it was that the Apostle cried out, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24). But blessed be God, we shall not carry this burden beyond the grave: the hour of death will free us from this awful incubus.

Second, we shall be delivered from *beholding the sins of others*. No more shall our ears be offended nor our hearts pained by those evils which flood the earth. Now, like it was with Lot in Sodom, we are grieved every day with the conversation of the godless. "Who that has any love to the Lord Jesus, any spark of true holiness, any sense of the worth of souls in his heart, can see what passes amongst us without trembling? How openly, daringly, almost universally, are the Commandments of God broken, His Gospel despised, His patience abused, and His power defied" (J. Newton). If that were the state of affairs almost two hundred years ago what would this writer say were he on earth today, and witnessed not only the wickedness of the profane world, but also the hypocrisy and degeneracy of Christendom? As the believer beholds how the Lord of glory is dishonoured in the house of those who pose as being His friends, how often is he constrained to say, "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away, and be at rest" (Psa. 55:6). Ere long this wish shall be answered.

Third, there will be perpetual rest from *all outward afflictions*, for in Heaven there is none to oppose and harass the people of God. No more shall the saint live in the midst of an ungodly generation, which when they do not actively persecute him, yet only reluctantly tolerate his presence. Though afflictions be needful for us in this present scene, and when sanctified to us are also profitable, nevertheless they are grievous to bear; but a day is coming when such tribulations will no longer be necessary, for the fine gold shall have been purged from all the dross. The storms of life will all be behind, and an unbroken calm shall be the believer's portion forever and ever. Where there shall be no more sin, there shall be no more sorrow: "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes: and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain; for the former things are passed away" (Rev. 21:4). Thank God that will be an eternal morning "without clouds."

Fourth, it will be a rest *from Satan's temptations*. How often he succeeds in disturbing the present rest of believers! How often they have cause to say with the Apostle, "Satan hath hindered me." He seeks in various ways to hinder them from attending the public means of grace, and if he fails in that, to unfit them while they are there. He seeks to hinder them when they are endeavouring to meditate on the Word or while engaged in private prayer. Like the miserable fiend that he is, the devil cannot bear to see one of Christ's people happy, and therefore he tries constantly to disturb their peace and joy. One reason why God permits this is that they may be conformed to their Head: when He was here on earth the devil was continually hounding Him—sufficient then for the disciple to be as his Master. Even when believers come to the hour of their departure from this world, their great Enemy endeavours to rob them of their assurance; but he can pursue them no further. Absent from the body, they are present with the Lord—forever out of the reach of their adversary.

Finally, they rest *from unsatisfied desires*. When one has really been born of the Spirit, he yearns to be done with sin forever, that never again there may be anything in his heart or life dishonouring unto the One who has redeemed him at such infinite cost. He pants for perfect conformity to the image of Christ, and for unbroken fellowship with Him. But such longings as these are not realized in this life. Instead, the old nature is left within the believer, and it is ever opposing the new, bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members (Rom. 7:23). But death affords him a welcome relief from indwelling corruptions, and he is made "a pillar in the temple of his God, and he shall go out no more" (Rev. 3:12). In the morning of the resurrection the believer's body shall be "fashioned like unto His glorious body" (Phil. 3:21) and every longing of his soul shall then be fully realized. The change from grace to glory will be as radical as the change from nature to grace.—A.W.P.

