

Volume 21—Studies in the Scriptures—March, 1942
A LEGAL SPIRIT.

Though the term “legality” occurs not upon the pages of Holy Writ, it is one which is found more or less frequently on the lips and pens of God’s servants, and we believe rightly so, providing it is given its proper import and legitimate application. Yet this is by no means always done, for often the word is accorded a significance which it does not bear and is ascribed to persons and things very erroneously and unjustly. In theological parlance “legal” has quite a different force from its dictionary meaning, where “legalese” is defined as “to render lawful” and “legality” as “lawfulness.” It is this etymological significance of the term which has led many ignorant people to form a false conception of it when employed by theologians with quite another and distinctive sense. When we hear it said in religious circles that such and such a person “has a legal spirit” we should rightly conclude that he is infected with something harmful, yet when David exclaimed, “O how love I Thy Law,” he certainly averred a “legal spirit” in the *dictionary* meaning of that expression.

From what has just been pointed out we may perceive the need for and the importance of defining our terms. What, then, does a preacher mean when he warns his hearers against a “legal spirit,” that is, when he employs the term properly, in a *religious* sense? He means that we must beware of looking within for something to commend ourselves unto God, to beware of trusting in any of our own performances to gain the Divine approbation, to beware of esteeming any of *our* works as meritorious or deserving of something good at the hands of the Most High. This is what the Pharisees did; this is what the deluded Papists do, thinking to *earn* God’s favour by their good deeds and to be justified by Him on that ground. Nor is such senseless egotism by any means confined to Papists, though all are not so frank in openly affirming it, nay, many are not aware of such madness and self-conceit, for the heart is exceedingly deceptive and its workings often concealed from our consciousness.

It has been rightly said that all men are “essentially legalistic by nature.” Nor is this to be wondered at when we consider that sin has so darkened man’s understanding and blinded his judgment that he calls darkness light, bondage liberty, and good evil. Being completely under the dominion of the Devil, fallen man is puffed up with pride, and instead of humbling himself beneath the mighty hand of God and confessing his ruined condition he is lifted up with complacency and foolishly imagines that he can not only do that which will meet with God’s approval, but actually make Him his Debtor, so that justice *requires Him* to reward him for his excellent performances. For though the natural man is not so destitute of moral sense and conscience as to be unaware that in certain respects at least he fails in the discharge of his duties, yet he is so deceived by his wicked heart as to conclude that his good deeds far outweigh his wicked ones, and therefore he is entitled unto favourable consideration.

In view of the facts stated in the last paragraph we should not be surprised that the natural man—*every man* while unregenerate—makes an evil use of the Moral Law. That which is provided for the purpose of revealing the ineffable holiness of God, man turns into an instrument for advancing his own self-righteousness. That which is furnished to give man a knowledge of sin, he perverts into a means for proclaiming his goodness. That which is designed to make man conscious of his spiritual impotency, he twists into an ordinance for exercising his powers. That which is calculated to serve as a schoolmaster

unto Christ, man distorts into a refuge in which he hides *from* Christ. Though the Law is spiritual and man carnal, though the Law is holy, and man corrupt, though the Law sets before him a standard of excellence which no fallen creature can possibly attain unto—yet the unsaved are so deceived by their own hearts and so deluded by Satan, they one and all imagine they can so far perform the Law's requirements that they have nothing to fear—and it is impossible to disillusion them until a miracle of grace is wrought within them.

Here, then, is "Legality" in its baldest form, stripped of all disguise. It consists of a spirit of independence, of self-sufficiency, of self-righteousness. It refuses to acknowledge that man is a fallen, depraved, lost sinner, "without strength," without a spark of spiritual life. It refuses to acknowledge man is utterly incapable of recovering himself, of bettering himself, of doing anything which can meet with the approval of a sin-hating God. Even those who have sat under sound preaching, who have an intelligent knowledge of these solemn truths, who profess to believe them, yet, while they remain in their unregenerate state they have not the slightest spiritual apprehension of them nor do their hearts consent to their verity. Though they read in God's Word, "by the deeds of the Law there shall no flesh be justified in His sight" (Rom. 3:20), they believe it not, but continue in their vain attempts to keep the Law in order to be justified by God. A spirit of legality binds them hand and foot as in fetters of steel.

In like manner a spirit of legality causes every unregenerate hearer to pervert the Gospel. Though the Gospel be exactly suited to the dire need of fallen man, yet it is far from being suited to his proud heart. It calls upon him to "Behold the Lamb of God," but in order to do so he must look away from himself—that is, he must renounce himself, deny himself, repudiate all fancied goodness in himself—and this is something which he is very far from being willing to comply with. The Gospel is a revelation of pure grace, of sovereign mercy, unmerited favour, offering to enrich spiritual paupers, to clothe the spiritually naked, to save Hell-deserving sinners: but that is something the self-righteous and independent heart of fallen man cannot tolerate. Yet few are frank enough to openly avow their antipathy to Divine grace; rather do multitudes pretend to admire it, and profess to receive it. But in fact they still trust in their own religious performances and simply bring in Christ as a make-weight to meet their deficiencies. In reality, they believe in grace *plus* works, Christ *plus* something of self.

Even Christians themselves have the root of legality still left within them and are to a greater or less degree infected with a self-righteous spirit to the end of their days. Though a Divine work of grace has been wrought in them, enabling them to see, feel and know they are depraved, polluted and vile creatures—causing them to close with Christ as He is presented to them in the Gospel and cast themselves upon Him as their only Hope, their Deliverer, their all-sufficient Saviour—pride still works within them, and as it does they are ready to give heed to some of Satan's lies and imagine that they are now in themselves something more, something better than Hell-deserving sinners. The whole Epistle to the Galatians demonstrates our danger at this point and most solemnly warns us to what fearful lengths a legal spirit may carry those who have savingly trusted in Christ. False teachers had introduced "another Gospel," affirming that Christ was not sufficient, that they must be circumcised and submit to the whole ceremonial law in order to be justified, and instead of rejecting this error with abhorrence, the legal hearts of the Galatians so far accepted it that the Apostle had to say "I stand in doubt of you."

Even where Christians are preserved from such awful lengths of legality as the Galatians, this root of bitterness is constantly bringing forth its foul and poisonous fruit, though for the most part they are quite unaware of it so subtle and secret are its activities. Whenever we are pleased with ourselves and our performances, a legal spirit is at work within us. When we are less conscious of our deep need of Christ pride is to that extent possessing our hearts. Whenever we feel that God, in His providences, is dealing severely with us and we ask what have I done to call for such chastisement? a self-righteous spirit possesses us. When we entertain hard feelings against God because He does not answer our prayers as quickly or as fully as we think He should, we are guilty of this sin—when we should marvel that He ever deigns to hear us at all! When we are hurt because fellow-Christians slight us and do not pay us that respect we feel we are entitled to, it is sure proof we think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. “Your glorying—whatever form it takes—is not good: know ye not that a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump” (1 Cor. 5:6)—a little “legality” or self-righteousness will defile the whole soul and grieve the Spirit of God.—A.W.P.

THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

21. *Unlawful Liberality*: Matthew 7:6.

Our present verse brings before us the seventh and shortest division of our Lord's Sermon, for it manifestly treats of a different branch of the Truth from any which has been dealt with in the previous sections. Though Christ's language here is figurative (as so often in this Address), it is far from being ambiguous, yet its force and purport were probably more easily perceived by His immediate audience than by us. With few exceptions it is the state of our *hearts* rather than the obscurity of its language which prevents our understanding the meaning of some portion in Holy Writ. Such is certainly the case here. It is greatly to be feared that there are many in Christendom today who are much averse from heeding this Divine precept, and therefore they pretend it is hard to be understood. None so blind as those who refuse to see. How many smug professors in the churches today would be highly offended if the minister dealt with them in the same way the Saviour did with the Canaanitish women, telling them, "It is not meet to take the children's bread and to cast it to dogs" (Matt. 15:26). Such discrimination does not at all suit this latitudinarian age.

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you" (Matt. 7:6). It must be admitted that most of the commentators appear to have experienced difficulty with this verse, not because they found its terms obscure, but in the fixing of their precise reference. It was not its interpretation which troubled them so much as its application. The method we propose to follow in our exposition of it is as follows. First, to ascertain its precise relation to the context. Second, to ponder it in the light of our Lord's own example, for most assuredly He ever practiced what He preached, and as we are called upon to "follow His steps" it is most necessary for us to examine the path He trod—here as everywhere. Third, to point out its application to the ministers of Christ, for it enunciates an important rule to regulate them in their dispensation of the Word. And fourth, to show how this rule applies to the private Christian. May the Spirit of Truth deign to guide our pen.

In examining the relation of our text to the context we must take into account both its more remote and nearer context. As we have so often pointed out, the principal key which unlocks to us the contents of this Sermon is found in our Lord's words, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy but to fulfil" (5:17). It therefore behooves us to inquire, What was the teaching of the Law and the Prophets concerning the subject treated of in our text? The first thing we learn there is that under the Law "dogs" and "swine" were *unclean and unholy* animals, the Israelites being prohibited from using them either for food or as sacrifices unto God, yea, they were not permitted to bring "the price of a dog (the money from selling one) into the house of the LORD" (Deut. 23:18). Second, we should observe that the term "dog" was applied to persons of worthless character: 1 Samuel 17:43; 2 Samuel 16:9; 2 Kings 8:13, etc.

The sons of Aaron were required to "put difference between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean" (Lev. 10:10), to maintain the lines of demarcation which God had drawn between the sacred and the profane. They were commanded to exclude the heathen from participating in any of the religious privileges of God's covenant people (Deut. 23:3). In the days of Israel's degeneracy God complained that "her priests have violated My Law and have profaned Mine holy things: they have *put no difference* be-

tween the holy and profane, neither have they showed difference between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 22:26): they had dealt with a latitude or "liberality" such as God had expressly forbidden. He had ordered that His priests should "teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezek. 44:23). A most discriminating ministry was appointed unto Jeremiah for the Lord required him to "take forth the precious from the vile" (15:19): that is, draw the line between the godly and the ungodly, addressing to each their distinctive and needed message. To Malachi it was promised, "Then shall ye return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not" (3:18).

Now, says Christ, "Think not that I am come to destroy the Law or the Prophets." I have received no commission from My Father to break down the barriers He has erected, to obliterate the lines He has drawn. Rather am I come "to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17): to magnify the Law and render it honourable, to vindicate the Prophets and make good their declarations. I am come to bring in the substance for the shadow, the reality for the typical, the vital for the ceremonial. I, too, shall discriminate between the clean and the unclean and place a fence between the holy and the unholy. Did Moses prohibit the people of God from intermarrying with idolaters? Did he exclude the heathen from the sacred temple? Did he declare that the food of the priestly family was "most holy" (Lev. 10:12-15) and their exclusive portion or property? Then I likewise command you, "Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine."

Coming now to the closer context. Is there not clearly a link between our present text and what immediately precedes it? Did not Christ here intimate that something more than clear vision and a kind and steady hand was required if we are to succeed in removing a "mote" from another's eye? As we pointed out last month, the one with an injured eye must be agreeable to submit if you are to help him: the one at fault must be willing to receive an admonition. But many are not so: so far from it they will resent your well-meant overtures and revile you for it—treading your admonitions under their feet and venting their fury upon you. "Speak not in the ears of a fool, for he will despise the wisdom of thy words" (Prov. 23:9). Thus having shown how to admonish, the Saviour now makes known who are to be admonished, or rather who are not to be. To reprove a son of Belial is wasted breath (1 Sam. 25:17).

In Matthew 7:5 the Lord had shown how an erring "brother" is to be dealt with—meekly and gently—the rebuke is to be given in a loving and humble spirit. But here in verse 6 Christ intimates that love must discriminate: all are not "brethren" and will not suffer a rebuke, no matter how graciously given. It is not sufficient, then, that we take care to be spiritually qualified for reproving another, but we must seek to make sure that there is some probability at least that our efforts will not be worse than lost upon the one we desire to help. Thus after prohibiting evil-minded censures, Christ here warns against imprudent ones. "Reprove not a scorner lest he hate thee" (Prov. 9:8). Here, then, is a necessary caution: zeal must be directed by knowledge and holy prudence. Not every person is a fit subject for reproof. Unreasonable men will scoff at the mildest criticism of their evil ways, and to quote Scripture to them only incites them to blasphemy and is casting pearls before swine.

But we may discover a further connection between our text and the verses preceding. In seeking to guard against hasty and harsh judgments we must also beware of abusing

grace. If on the one hand we should watch against unjust and unmerciful censuring, on the other we must not be guilty of judging laxly and loosely. There are not only the "sheep" of Christ, but the "dogs" and "swine" of the world, and they are to be treated as such. When an open worldling or obviously carnal person applies for church-membership it would be quite wrong to silence God-fearing objectors with, "Judge not lest ye be judged." Grace must not be allowed to override the requirements of holiness so that the unclean are permitted to enjoy those privileges reserved for them who are washed in the blood of the Lamb. It is through failure at this very point, through a false "charity," by refusing to heed this command of Christ, that the grossest of evils have been tolerated in the House of God until the mystical Babylon is now "a cage of every unclean and hateful bird."

Yet it must not be supposed that our text is to be restricted unto a prohibition against imprudent reproving: rather does it enunciate a *general principle* which is of wide application, for the better perception of which we now turn to ponder it in the light of our Lord's own personal example. A very wide field is here open for investigation, yet we can only now call attention to a few of its most distinctive features. If the reader will examine the four Gospels afresh from this particular angle he is likely to meet with some surprises and find there the reverse of what the teaching he has imbibed would lead him to expect. For example, would not the ordinary church-goer of today suppose that the Lord Jesus spent most of His time in preaching the Gospel to the unsaved, that He sought out the unchurched masses, endeavouring to arouse them from their unconcern, that He made it His business to go after the giddy worldling and convince him of the folly of his ways, that He proclaimed the love of God to every soul He could possibly make contact with? Then turn to the first four books of the New Testament and see whether or not this was so.

We do indeed read frequently that Christ taught both in the synagogue and in the temple, yet even there He never so much as once mentioned the love of God to sinners—though He had much to say about the Father's love when He was alone with "His own." He frequently spoke of His approaching death unto His disciples, but where did He ever preach the Atonement in the hearing of the multitude? It is true that He spoke often in the open air (though never on the streets!), yet it was to those who *sought unto* Him (Mark 2:13, Luke 6:17). He never pressed His company on them: Mark 7:17. He spake many things unto the multitudes in parables, yet the interpretation of them was reserved for God's elect (Matt. 13:8, 9, 11, 36). Our Lord was not transfigured before the gaze of the vulgar crowd, but only in the sight of a favoured few. Nor was He seen by the unbelieving world after His resurrection. The grand prophecy of Matthew 24 and 25 was delivered in the hearing of none but believers. He never cast pearls before swine: even when Pilate *asked Him*, "What is truth?" (John 18:38), He did not say, "I am the Truth," nor did He explain to him the way of salvation.

But let us not be mistaken at this point. God forbid that we should be found writing anything which would deter *exercised* souls from seeking Christ and giving them the impression that they would be unwelcome did they come to Him in their deep distress. Nothing is made plainer in the four Gospels than the glorious fact that the Lord Jesus is accessible to every poor sinner who feels his need of Him and that He is willing and ready to heal his soul: "All that the Father giveth Me shall come to Me, and him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37), is His own blessed declaration. He

declined not an invitation to eat with publicans and sinners, nor did He turn His back upon the leper who sought Him. But what we have directed attention to above is His attitude towards those who *sought him not*, to those who evidenced no interest in Him, to those who opposed Him. Read again the many recorded cases where the Pharisees antagonized Him: is there a single instance where He preached the Gospel to them? So with the Sadducees and lawyers who endeavoured to ensnare Him: He closed their mouths, but He never opened His heart to them or gave that which was holy unto dogs!

Third, our text enunciates an important principle for the minister of Christ to be regulated by—it is to be borne in mind that the first application of this Sermon is to *ministers* (Matt. 5:1, 2). That rule may be stated thus: *discrimination is to be exercised* when dispensing the Word of God. Nothing is more urgently needed and seldom found today than a discriminating ministry by which we mean a “taking forth the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15:19). In our congregations both of those classes are represented: those who are dear to God and those abhorred by Him. Now though you cannot distinguish them by *name* yet you can by *character*. When addressing yourself to the people of God you should make it quite plain that the unregenerate have “no part or lot in the matter.” When preaching from the Divine promises it is necessary to describe the spiritual marks of those to whom such Divine dainties really belong—to those who are not conformed to this world, who deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Christ. The line of demarcation must be drawn so plainly that each hearer knows to which side of the line he belongs.

The Word of God has to be “rightly divided” (2 Tim. 2:15) if each hearer is to obtain his legitimate portion. When the pulpit seeks to expose the hypocrite, care needs to be taken lest Christ’s little ones stumble, and when the minister seeks to comfort the distressed saints the cordial must be expressly labeled so that the ungodly are not bolstered up in a false peace. Unless the minister exercises the most prayerful caution, he will be unable to escape that solemn charge, “with lies ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (Ezek. 13:22). Again, Matthew 7:6 is woefully contravened when those with the most barren profession are received into church fellowship: the “judgment of charity” does not require of us to call darkness light. Laxity is as much an evil as censorship. Admitting to the Lord’s Table open worldlings is a flagrant violation of our text. And how often is it disregarded in “funeral services and in sermons”?

It is very necessary this precept—“Give not that which is holy unto the dogs”—should be pressed upon the *rank and file* of God’s people. In certain circles it has been taught that as soon as a person has experienced the saving grace of God in his heart, it is his bounden duty to preach Christ to all his acquaintances, to endeavour to become a “soul winner,” and that if he or she declined such “personal work” and evangelistic endeavour it is because he is cold and selfish, indifferent to the eternal welfare of those around him. But where did Christ or any of His Apostles bestow such a commission on any young convert? “Come and hear, all ye that *fear God*, and I will declare what He hath done for my soul” (Psa. 66:16): that qualification warns us against publishing the most sacred experiences of our hearts to all and sundry, for the unregenerate have no more capacity to appreciate the sovereign operations of the Spirit than swine have to rate pearls at their true value. But is not the young convert to “witness for Christ”? Assuredly,

but how? “Ye should *show forth* the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light” (1 Peter 2:9): a changed life, an unworldly walk, is the most affective “witness” of all! See Matthew 5:16.

Zeal needs to be tempered with *knowledge*. The holy things of the Gospel are not to be bandied about indiscriminately: the precious secrets of His love which the Lord has revealed to us are not to be communicated to His enemies. If believers defy this Divinely-imposed restriction they must not be surprised at meeting with insults and incurring the ire of those upon whom they attempt to force the holy mysteries of the Faith. Of the Pharisees Christ said, “Let them alone” (Matt. 15:14), do not attempt to convert them from the error of their ways. “Of *some* have compassion, making a difference” (Jude 22): what a discriminating word is that! We are told to “Go from the presence of a fool” (Prov. 14:7), and not lower our Christian dignity by arguing with him. But are we not told to “Be ready always to give an answer to every man that *asketh* a reason of the hope that is in us”? (1 Peter 3:15). Yes, when “asked” (compare Prov. 22:21) and then “with meekness and fear” (1 Peter 3:15) and not with bombast and impudence. The Epistles of the New Testament are to be read to “holy brethren” (1 Thess. 5:27), but we know of no warrant to read them to worldlings.

It has long impressed this writer that that which takes place in the secular sphere is but a shadowing forth of what has first happened in the spiritual realm. For many years past the majority of the preachers jettisoned the Divine Law, and in the utter lawlessness which fills the world today we have the inevitable repercussion. They concentrated on the promises but ignored the precepts and in their failure to urge upon God’s children an obedient walk we have reaped the disobedience of the modern child. Women were given a place in the churches which Scriptures prohibits (1 Cor. 14:34) and in consequence a generation of self-assertive “he women” has arisen who ape men in almost everything. Today we have a *plague of dogs*—over three million in Great Britain—making the night hideous with their howls, befouling the pavements and consuming vast quantities of food while human beings are strictly rationed. In the cities they have become a curse and we believe this is a Divine judgment upon the general disregard of Matthew 7:6. It is a common sight to behold a child leading about a huge mastiff and silly women accompanied by two or three poodles. “Beware of dogs” (Phil. 3:2). “For without are dogs” (Rev. 22:15)—excluded from the Holy City.

In conclusion let us note the practical instruction hinted by the figure of the “pearls.” First, it intimates what we should regard as our *true riches*, namely, the contents of God’s Word, for they constitute the Christian’s precious treasure. “Happy is the man that findeth wisdom and the man that getteth understanding. For the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies, and all the things thou canst desire are not to be compared unto her” (Prov. 3:13-15). Second, it intimates wherein we should *content* ourselves in the calamities and casualties of this life. We may lose our health and wealth, our friends and fame, yet this treasure remains. Here is a lamp for the darkest night (Psa. 119:105): here is to be found comfort in the sorest affliction (Psa. 119:50): here are to be obtained songs for our pilgrimage (Psa. 119:54). Third, it intimates how we are to use the Word. A person possessed of valuable pearls is at great pains to secure them, how much more so should we be with this Pearl of pearls—storing it in our memories, locking it in our hearts—“Hold-

ing the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience” (1 Tim. 3:9). This was David’s practice (Psa. 119:11), and Mary’s (Luke 2:51): may it be ours too.—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

27. *In the Cave.*

Two things are made prominent in the opening verses of 1 Kings 19, the one serving to enhance the other: the bitter fruits of the Prophet's panic and the superabounding grace of the Lord unto His erring servant. The threatening message sent by the furious Jezebel had filled Elijah with consternation and in his subsequent actions we behold *the effects* which follow when the heart is filled with unbelief and fear. Instead of spreading the queen's message before his Master, Elijah took matters into his own hands. Instead of wanting patiently for Him, he acted on hasty impulse. First, he deserted his post of duty and fled from Jezreel, whither "the hand of the Lord" had brought him. Second, occupied solely with self, he "went for his life," being no longer actuated with the glory of God nor the good of His people. Third, folly now possessed him, for in rushing to Beersheba he entered the territory of Jehoshaphat, whose son had married "the daughter of Ahab"—not even common sense regulates those who are out of fellowship with God.

Elijah dare not remain in Beersheba, so goes "a day's journey into the wilderness," illustrative of the fact that when unbelief and fear take possession, a spirit of restlessness fills the soul so that it is no longer capable of being still before God. Finally, when his feverish energy had spent itself, the Prophet flung himself beneath a juniper tree and prayed for death. He was now in the Slough of Despond, feeling that life was no longer worth living. And it is on *that* dark background we behold the glories of Divine grace which now shone forth so blessedly. In the hour of his despair and need the Lord did not forsake His poor servant. No, first He gave His beloved sleep, to rest his jaded nerves. Second, He sent an angel to minister unto him. Third, He provided refreshments for his body. This was grace indeed: not only undeserved but entirely unsought by the Tishbite. Wondrous indeed are the ways of Him with whom we have to do, who is "longsuffering to usward."

And what was Elijah's response to these amazing overtures of God's mercy? Was he overwhelmed by the Divine favour—melted by such lovingkindness? Cannot the reader, yea, the Christian reader, supply the answer from his own sad experience? When you have wandered from the Lord and forsaken the paths of righteousness, and He has borne with your waywardness—and instead of visiting your transgressions with the rod has continued to shower His temporal blessings upon you—has a sense of His goodness led you to repentance, or while still in a backslidden state have you not rather accepted God's benefits as a matter of course, unmoved by the most tender mercies? Such is fallen human nature the world over, in every age: "As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to man" (Prov. 27:19). And Elijah was no exception, for we are told, "he did eat and drink and *laid down again*" (1 kings 19:6)—no sign of repentance for the past, no hint of gratitude for present mercies, no exercise of soul about future duty.

Ah, in this line of the picture we are shown yet another effect which follows upon the heart's giving way to unbelief and fear, and that is *insensibility of soul*. When the heart is estranged from God, when self becomes the center and circumference of our interests, a hardness and deadness steals over us so that we are impervious unto the Lord's goodness. Our vision is dimmed so that we no longer perceive whose gracious Hand it is which is ministering to us. Our affections are chilled so that we no longer appreciate the benefits bestowed upon us. We become indifferent, callous, unresponsive. We descend to the level of the beasts, consuming what is given us with no thought of the Creator's faithful-

ness. Does not this short sentence sum up the life of the unregenerate: “they eat and drink and lay down again”—without any regard for God, care for their souls or concern for eternity? And, my reader, that is the case with a backsliding believer: he comes down to the level of the ungodly, for God no longer has the chief place in his heart and thoughts.

And what was the Lord’s response to such gross ingratitude on the part of His servant? Did He now turn from him in disgust, as deserving of no further consideration from Him? Well He might, for despising grace is no ordinary sin. While grace does not make light of sin—as the sequel here will make evident—if sin were able to thwart grace it would cease to be *grace*. As grace can never be attracted by well-desert so it is never repelled by ill-desert. And God was dealing in grace, sovereign grace, with the Prophet. Wherefore we read, “And the angel of the LORD came again the *second* time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee” (1 Kings 19:7). Truly we must exclaim with the Psalmist, “He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath He hid His face from him” (22:24). And why? Because God is love and love “suffereth long and is kind . . . is not easily provoked . . . beareth all things” (1 Cor 13:4-7).

“And the angel of the LORD came again the second time.” How wondrous is the Lord’s patience! “God hath spoken once” and that should be sufficient for us, yet it rarely is so, and therefore is it added, “twice have I heard this, that power belongeth unto God” (Psa. 62:11). The first time the cock crowed Peter paid no heed to it, but “the *second* time it crowed he “called to mind the word which Jesus said unto him . . . and when he thought thereon, he wept” (Mark 14:72). Alas, how slow we are to respond to the Divine advances: And “the voice spake unto him again the *second* time, What God hath cleansed call not thou unclean” (Acts 10:15). “Rejoice in the Lord always”: surely the Christian needs not to have such a word repeated! The Apostle knew better: “*Again* I say, Rejoice!” is added (Phil. 4:4). What dull scholars we are: “when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you *again*” (Heb. 5:12), and thus it has to be “line upon line, precept upon precept.”

“And the angel of the LORD came again the second time” (1 Kings 19:7). It seems most probable that it was evening when the angel came to Elijah the first time and bade him arise and eat, for we are told he had gone “a day’s journey into the wilderness” before he sat down under the juniper bush. After he had partaken of the refreshment provided by such august hands, Elijah had lain him down again and night had spread her temporary veil over the scorched sands. When the angel came and touched him the second time day had dawned: through the intervening hours of darkness the celestial messenger had kept watch while the weary Prophet slept. Ah, dear reader, the love of God knows no change—it fainteth not, neither is weary. Darkness makes no difference and serves not to conceal its object from it. Unfailing love watches over the believer during the hours when he is insensible to its presence. “Having loved His own which were in the world He loved them unto the end” (John 13:1)—unto the end of all their wanderings and unworthiness.

“And said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee” (1 Kings 19:7). May we not perceive here a gentle rebuke for the Prophet? “The journey is too great for thee.” What journey? He had not been directed to take any! It was a journey undertaken of his own accord, a devising of his own self will. It was a journey away from the post of duty, which he ought at that hour have been occupying. It was as though this heavenly

messenger said to the Prophet: See what comes of your self-will? It has reduced you to weakness and starvation. Nevertheless God has taken pity on you and furnished refreshment. He will not break the bruised reed nor quench the smoking flax. The Lord is full of kindness: He foresees the further demands which are going to be made upon your frame, so "Arise and eat." Elijah had fixed his mind on the distant Horeb, and so God anticipates his needs, even though they were the needs of a truant servant and rebellious child. O what a God is ours!

But there is a practical lesson here for each of us, even for those whom grace hath preserved from backsliding. "The journey is too great for thee." Not only life's journey as a whole, but each daily segment of it will make demands above and beyond our own unaided powers. The faith required, the courage demanded, the patience needed, the trials to be borne, the enemies to be overcome, are "too great" for mere flesh and blood. What then? Why, begin the day as Elijah began this one: "Arise and eat." You do not propose to go forth to the day's work without first supplying your body with food and drink, and is the soul more able to do without nourishment? God does not ask *you* to provide the spiritual food, but has graciously placed it by your side. All He asks is, "Arise and eat"—feed on the heavenly manna that your strength may be renewed; begin the day by partaking of the Bread of Life that you may be thoroughly furnished for the many demands that will be made upon your graces.

"And he arose, and did eat and drink" (1 Kings 19:8). Ah, though his case was such a sad one, "the root of the matter" was in him. He did not scorn the provision supplied him nor despise the use of means. Though there is no sign of gratitude, no returning of thanks to the gracious Giver, yet when bidden to eat Elijah obediently complied. Though he had taken matters into his own hands, he did not now defy the angel to his face. As he had refused to lay violent hands upon himself, asking the Lord to take his life from him, so now he did not deliberately starve himself but ate the food set before him. The righteous may fall, yet he will not be "utterly cast down." The flax may not burn brightly, but smoke will evidence that it has not quite gone out. Life in the believer may wane to a low ebb, yet sooner or later it *will* give proof that it is still there.

"And went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God" (v. 8). In His grace the Lord passes over the infirmities of those whose hearts are upright with Him and who sincerely love Him though there still be that in them which ever seeks to oppose His love. Very blessed is the particular detail now before us: God not only reviewed the flagging energy of His servant but He caused the food which he had eaten to supply him with strength for a long time to come. Should the skeptic ask, How could that single meal nourish the Prophet for almost six weeks? It would be sufficient answer to bid him explain *how our food* supplies us with energy for a single day! The greatest philosopher cannot explain the mystery, but the simplest believer will reply, By the power and blessing of God upon it. No matter how much food we eat, or how choice it is, unless the Divine blessing attend it, it nourishes us not a single whit. The same God who can make a meal energize us for forty minutes can make it do so for forty days when He so pleases.

"Horeb the mount of God" was certainly a remarkable place for Elijah to make for, for there is no spot on earth where the presence of God was so signally manifested as *there*, at least in Old Testament times. It was there that Jehovah had appeared unto Moses at the burning bush (Exo. 3:1-4). It was there the Law had been given to Israel (Deut.

4:15) under such awe-inspiring phenomena. It was there that Moses had communed with Him for forty days and nights. Yet, though Israel's Prophets and poets were wont to draw their sublimest imagery from the splendours and terrors of that scene, strange to say there is no record in Scripture of any Israelite visiting that holy mount from the time the Law was given until Elijah fled there from Jezebel. Whether it was his actual intention to proceed there when he left Jezreel we know not. Why he went there we cannot be sure. Perhaps, as Matthew Henry suggested, it was to indulge his melancholy, saying with Jeremiah, "O that I had in the wilderness a lodging place of wayfaring men, that I might leave my people, and go from them!" (9:2).

Strangely enough there are some who think that the Prophet wended his way across the wilderness to Horeb because he had received instructions from the angel to do so. But surely this view is negated by the sequel: would the Lord had *twice* uttered that searching and rebuking, "What doest thou here Elijah?" had he gone there in obedience to the celestial messenger? That his steps were Divinely guided we doubt not, for there was a striking propriety that he who was peculiarly the legal reformer should meet with Jehovah in the place where the Law had been promulgated—compare Moses *and* Elijah appearing with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration. Though Elijah came not to Horeb by the *command* of God, he was directed there by the secret *Providence* of God: "A man's heart deviseth his way, but the LORD directeth his steps" (Prov. 16:9). And *how*? By a secret impulse from within which destroys not his freedom of action. "The king's heart is in the hand of the LORD: as the rivers of water He turneth it withersoever He will" (Prov. 21: 1)—the waters of a river flow freely, yet is their course determined by Heaven!

"And he came thither into a cave, and lodged there" (1 Kings 19:9). At last the Prophet was contented with the distance he had put between himself and the one who had sworn to avenge the death of her prophets: there in that remote mountain, concealed in some dark cave amid its precipices, he felt secure. How he now employed himself we are not told. If he tried to engage in prayer we may be sure he had no liberty and still less delight therein. More probably he sat and mused upon his troubles. If his conscience accused him that he had acted too hastily in fleeing from Jezreel, that he ought not to have yielded to his fears, but rather put his trust in God and proceeded to instruct the nation, the sequel indicates he would have stifled such humiliating convictions instead of confessing to God his failure. "The backslider in heart shall be filled with his own ways" (Prov. 14:14)—in the light of such a Scripture who can doubt that Elijah was now engaged in pitying and vindicating himself, reflecting on the ingratitude of his fellow countrymen and aggrieved at the harsh treatment of Jezebel.

"And, behold, the word of the LORD came to him" (1 Kings 19:9). God had spoken to him personally on previous occasions. The word of the Lord had ordered him to hide by the brook Cherith (17:2, 3). It had come to him again bidding him betake himself to Zarephath (17:8, 9). And yet again it had commanded him to show himself unto Ahab (18:1). But it seems to this writer that here we have something different from the other instances. As the fugitive lurked in the cave, we are told, "and, *behold*, the Word of the LORD came to him." That expressive term does not occur in any of the previous passages and its employment here is the Spirit's intimation that something extraordinary is before us. On this occasion it was something more than a Divine *message* which was communicated to the Prophet's ear, being nothing less than a visit from a Divine *Person*

which the Prophet now received. It was none other than the second Person of the Trinity, the Eternal "Word" (John 1:1) who now interrogated the erring Tishbite. This is unmistakably clear from the next clause: "and HE said unto him." Very remarkable, very solemn is this.

"And He said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). Elijah had turned aside from the path of duty, and his Master knew it. The living God knows where His servants are, what they are doing and not doing. None can escape His omniscient gaze, for, "The eyes of the LORD are in every place" (Prov. 15:3). The Lord's question was a rebuke, a searching word addressed to his conscience. As we do not know which particular word the Lord accentuated we will emphasize each one separately. "What doest thou?" Is it good or evil, for totally inactive, in either mind or body, man cannot be. "What *doest* thou?" Are you employing your time for the glory of God and the good of His people, or is it being wasted in peevish repinings? "What doest *thou*?" You who are the servant of the Most High. You who has been so highly honoured, who has received such signal proofs of God's power—could you not have committed your cause unto Him and depended upon the Almighty for protection? "What doest thou *here*?"—away from the land of Israel, away from the work of reformation.

"And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thine altars, and slain Thy Prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:10). As we ponder these words we find ourselves out of accord with the commentators, most of whom severely criticize the Prophet for seeking to excuse himself and throw the blame on others. That which impresses this writer first is the ingenuousness of Elijah: there were no evasions and equivocations, but a frank and candid explanation of his conduct. True, what he here advanced furnished no sufficient reason for his flight, yet it was the truthful declaration of an honest heart. Well for both writer and reader if we can always give as good an account of ourselves when challenged by the Holy One. If we were as open and frank with the Lord as Elijah was we could expect to be dealt with as graciously as he was; for note it well, the Prophet received *no rebuke* from God in answer to his outspokenness.

"I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts" was a statement of fact: he had not shrunk from the most difficult and dangerous service for his Master and his people. It was not because his zeal had cooled that he had fled from Jezreel. "For the children of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, thrown down Thy altars, and slain Thy Prophets with the sword." Elijah had been deeply distressed to behold how grievously the Lord was dishonoured by the nation which was called by His name. God's glory lay very near his heart, and it affected him deeply to see His laws broken, His authority flouted, His worship despised, the homage of the people given to senseless idols and their tacit consent to the murder of His servants. "And I, even I only, am left." He had, at imminent peril to his life, laboured hard to put a stop to Israel's idolatry and to reclaim the nation; but to no avail. So far as he could perceive, he had laboured in vain and spent his strength for naught. "And they seek my life, to take it away"—what then is the use of my wasting any more time on such a stiff-necked and unresponsive people!—A.W.P.

DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

1. Introduction.

In previous volumes we have expounded at some length (though not in this precise order) the great truths of Divine Election or Predestination unto salvation; the Atonement or perfect Satisfaction which Christ rendered unto the Law on behalf of His people; fallen man's total impotency unto good; the miracle of Regeneration, whereby the elect (who are born into this world dead in trespasses and sins) are quickened into newness of life. Also justification by faith whereby the believing sinner is delivered from the curse of the Law, the righteousness of Christ being reckoned to his account; the believer's Sanctification whereby he is set apart unto God, constituted a temple of the Holy Spirit, delivered from the reigning power of sin, and made meet for Heaven. It is therefore fitting that we should now take up the complementary and completing truth of the final perseverance of the saints, or the absolute certainty of their entrance into the Inheritance purchased for them by Christ and unto which they have been begotten by the Spirit.

This blessed subject has been an occasion for fierce strife in the theological world and nowhere is the breach between Calvinists and Arminians more apparent than in their diverse views of this doctrine. The former regard it as the very salt of the covenant, as one of the principal mercies purchased by the redemption of Christ, as one of the richest jewels which adorn the Gospel's crown, as one of the choicest cordials for the reviving of fainting saints, as one of the greatest incentives to practical holiness. But with the latter it is the very reverse. Arminians regard this doctrine as an invention of Satan, as highly dishonouring to God, as a poisoning of the Gospel fountain, as giving license to self-indulgence and being subversive of all real piety. In this instance it is impossible to seek a golden mean between two extremes, for one party must be extremely right and the other extremely wrong.

While we have no doubt whatever in which of these two camps the truth is to be found, yet we are far from allowing that Calvinists have always presented this doctrine in its Scriptural proportions. It is our firm conviction that during the last two or three generations, it has been dealt with by many novices in such a manner as to do far more evil than good. Large numbers of men have contended for the "security of the Saints" in such a crude and lopsided way that not a few godly souls stumbled and in their revolt against such extremism supposed their only safeguard was to reject the whole subject in toto. Such a course is wrong: if some amateur would-be-bakers turn out uneatable loaves, that is no reason why I should henceforth decline all bread—I should be the loser if I acted so radically.

We have no sympathy whatever with the bald and unqualified declaration, "Once saved always saved." In a publication issued by a widely-known "Bible Institute" appears the following, "I went to the death cell of that condemned man in _____ prison a few days ago. I went to tell him of a pardon from my King. I had no right to offer him a pardon from the State . . . but I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary's cross, offering eternal redemption from the penalty of sin, so that he could be justified before the 'Judge of all the earth' in the court of Heaven, for all the endless ages. Thank God! I found that man clear on the plan of salvation, for years ago under the ministry of _____ he had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour. But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost his *fellowship* with his Lord, *not* his *salvation*. And the result was a life of sin. It took an awful experience to turn him from his self-willed way;

but as I talked with him in his prison cell, I was convinced that he was born again and repentant for his crime.”

While it lies entirely outside our province to form any judgment as to the eternal destiny of that murderer, yet a few comments on the preacher’s account of the above incident seem to be called for. What impression is likely to be made on the mind of the average light-headed professor by the reading of such a case? What effect is it calculated to produce upon those church members who are walking arm in arm with the world? First, we are told that this murderer was “clear on the plan of salvation”: so also is Satan, but what does such mental knowledge avail him! Next it is said that years before, this condemned man “had accepted Jesus as his personal Saviour” under the ministry of a certain well-known “Revivalist.” But before any soul can receive Christ as Saviour, he must first throw down the weapons of his rebellion, repent of his sins, and surrender to Christ *as Lord*.

The Saviour is the Holy One of God, who saves His people “*from* their sins” (Matt. 1:21) and not *in* their sins. He saves them from the love and dominion of their sins. How different was the preaching of Spurgeon from that of the cheap-jack “evangelists” who have followed him. Said he, “Go not to God and ask for mercy with sin in thy hand. What would you think of the rebel who appeared before the face of his sovereign and asked for pardon with the dagger sticking in his belt and with the declaration of his rebellion on his breast? Surely he would deserve double doom for thus mocking his monarch while he pretended to be seeking mercy. If a wife has forsaken her husband do you think she would have the impudence, with brazen forehead, to come back and ask his pardon leaning on the arm of her paramour? Yet so it is with you—perhaps asking for mercy and going on in sin—praying to be reconciled to God and yet harbouring and indulging your lusts . . . cast away thy sin or He cannot hear thee. If thou lift up unholy hands with a lie in thy right hand, prayer is worthless on thy lips” (C.H.S., 1860).

Returning to the above incident. This preacher declares of the man in the condemned cell, “But through the years he had grown cold and indifferent: he had lost his *fellowship* with his Lord, *not* his *salvation*, and the result was a life of sin.” Such a statement is a flat contradiction in terms. Salvation and sin are opposites. “If any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things are passed away, behold all things are become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). Divine salvation is a supernatural work which produces supernatural effects. It is a miracle of grace which causes the wilderness to blossom as the rose. It is known by its fruits. It is a lie to call a tree good if it bears evil fruit. Justification is evidenced by sanctification. The new birth is made manifest by a new life. Where one makes a profession of being saved and then follows it with “a life of sin” it is a case of the dog turning again to his vomit and the washed sow to her wallowing in the mire (2 Peter 2:22).

Before dismissing this case a word should be said upon the preacher’s statement, “I could tell him of the One who took his place on Calvary’s cross,” which occurs, be it noted, at the beginning of the narrative. Surely the first thing to press upon a murderer would be the awfulness of his condition: to remind him that he had not only grievously wronged a fellow-creature, but had sinned against the Holy One; to faithfully set before him the solemn fact that in a few days he would have to appear before the Divine Judge. *Then* he could speak of the amazing grace of God which had provided a Saviour for sinners, even the very chief of sinners, and that He is freely offered to all by the Gospel, on the terms of repentance and faith. But the Scriptures nowhere warrant us to tell any indif-

ferent, impenitent sinner that Christ, “took his place on the cross”: the substitutionary work of Christ is a Truth for the comfort of believers and not a sop for unbelievers. O the ignorance and confusion now running rampant in Christendom!

In the New Testament the salvation of God is presented under three tenses: past, present, and future. As a work “begun” (Phil. 1:6), but not completed in a moment of time: “Who *hath* saved us” (2 Tim. 1:9), “*work out* your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), “now is our salvation *nearer* than when we believed” (Rom. 13:11). These verses do not refer to three different salvations, but to three distinct phases and stages of salvation: salvation as an accomplished fact, as a present process, and as a future prospect. First, God saves from the *pleasure* of sin, causing the heart to loathe what it formerly loved. That which is displeasing to God is made bitter to the soul, and sin becomes its greatest grief and burden. Next, faith is communicated by the Spirit and the penitent sinner is enabled to believe the Gospel, and thereby he is saved from the *penalty* of sin. Then it is he enters upon the Christian life, wherein he is called upon to “fight the good fight of faith,” for there are enemies both within and without which seek to bring about his destruction.

For that “fight” God has provided adequate armour (Eph. 6:11), which the Christian is bidden to take unto himself. For that fight he is furnished with effective weapons, but these he must make good use of. For that fight spiritual strength is available (2 Tim. 2:1), yet it has to be diligently and trustfully sought. It is in this fight, a lifelong process, a conflict in which no furloughs are granted, the Christian is being saved from the *power* of sin. In it he receives many wounds, but he betakes himself to the great Physician for healing. In it he is often cast down, but by grace he is enabled to rise again. Finally, he shall be saved from the *presence* of sin, for at death the believer is forever rid of his evil nature.

Now it is that third aspect of salvation which concerns us in this present series of articles, namely, the believer’s perseverance: his perseverance in the fight of faith. The doctrine which is to be before us relates to the Christian’s being saved from the *power* of indwelling sin during the interval which elapses between his being saved from its penalty and the moment when he will be saved from its presence. Between his being saved from Hell and his actual entrance into Heaven he needs saving from himself—saving from this evil world in which he is still left—saving from Satan who as a roaring lion goes about seeking whom he may devour. The journey from Egypt to Canaan lies *not* for the most part through green pastures and by the still waters but across an arid desert with all its trials and tests, and few who left that House of Bondage reached the land of milk and honey. The great majority fell in the wilderness through their unbelief—types of numerous professors who begin well but fail to endure unto the end.

There are multitudes in Christendom today deluded with the idea that a mere historical faith in the Gospel ensures their reaching Heaven—who verily suppose they have “received Christ as their personal Saviour” simply because they believe that He died on the Cross as an atoning sacrifice for the sins of all those who repudiate their own righteousness and trust in Him. They imagine that under the influence of religious emotion and the pressing appeals of an evangelist who assures them that “John 3:16 means what it says,” all is now well with them—that having obtained a ticket for Glory they may, like passengers on a train, relax and go to sleep—confident that in due time they shall arrive at their desired destination. By such deceptions Satan chloroforms myriads into Hell. So

widespread is this deadly delusion that one who undertakes to expose its sophistry is certain to be regarded by many as a heretic.

The Christian life commences amid the throes of the new birth, under acute travail of soul. When the Spirit of God begins His work in the heart, conscience is convicted, the terrors of the Law are felt, the wrath of a sin-hating God becomes real. As the requirements of Divine holiness begin to be apprehended, the soul, so long accustomed to having its own way, “kicks against the pricks,” and only in the day of God’s power is it “made willing” (Psa. 110:3) to take the yoke of Christ upon it. And then it is that the young believer, conscious of the plague of his own heart, fearful of his own weakness and instability, aware of the enmity of Satan against him, anxiously cries out, How shall I be able to keep from drowning in such a world as this? what provision has God made that I shall not perish on my way to everlasting bliss? The Lord has done great things for me, whereof I am glad; but unless He *continues* to exert His sovereign power on my behalf, I shall be lost!

Moreover, as the young Christian holds on his way he observes how many of those who took up a Christian profession walk no more in the paths of righteousness, having returned to the world. This stumbles him and makes him ask, Shall I also make shipwreck of the faith? Ah, none stand more sure and safe than those who feel they cannot stand, whose cry is, “Hold Thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa. 119:117). “Happy is the man who feareth always” (Prov. 28:14). Happy the soul who is possessed of that holy fear which drives him to the Lord, keeps him vile in his own eyes and causes him to ever depend upon the promise and grace of a faithful God, which makes him rejoice with trembling, and tremble with hope.

In the case which we have just supposed—and it is one which is true to life—we discover an additional reason for taking up the present subject. It is necessary that the young and fearing Christian should be further strengthened in the faith, that he should be informed the Good Shepherd does not leave His lambs undefended in the midst of wolves, that full provision is made for their safety. Yet it is at this stage especially that heavenly wisdom is needed by the instructor if he is to be of real help. On the one hand he must be careful not to cast pearls before swine, and on the other he must not be deterred from giving to the children of God their rightful and needful Bread. If he must be on his guard against ministering unlawful comfort to carnal professors, he must also see to it that legitimate comforts and cordials are not withheld from saints with feeble knees and whose hands hang down because of their discouragements.

Each of the dangers we have alluded to will be avoided by due attention unto the terms of our theme and an amplification thereof. It is the final perseverance of the *saints* we shall write about, the enduring of those who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb and *not* those who have been whitewashed by *self*-reformation. It is the final perseverance of saints along the *Narrow Way*, along the paths of righteousness. It is their perseverance in the fight of faith and the performance of obedience. The Word of God nowhere teaches that once a man is born again he may give free rein to the lusts of the flesh and be as worldly as he pleases, and still be sure of getting to Heaven. Instead, Scripture says, and the words are addressed to believers, “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die” (Rom. 8:13). No, if a man is truly born again he will desire, purpose and endeavour to live as becomes a child of God.

There has been some deliberation in our mind as to which is the better title for this doctrine: the *preservation*, or the *perseverance* of the saints. At first sight the former seems preferable, as being more honouring to God, throwing the emphasis on His keeping power. Yet further reflection will show that such preferableness is more seeming than real. We prefer the latter because rightly understood it includes the former while at the same time pressing the believer's responsibility. Moreover, we believe it to be more in accord with the general tenor of Scripture. The saints are "kept by the power of God through faith" (1 Peter 1:5). He does not deal with them as unaccountable automatons, but as moral agents, just as their natural life is maintained through their use of means and by their avoidance of that which is inimical to their well-being, so it is with the maintenance and preservation of their spiritual lives.

God preserves His people in this world through their perseverance—their use of means and avoidance of what is destructive. We do not mean for a moment that the everlasting purpose of the Most High is made contingent on the action of the creature. The saints' perseverance is a *Divine gift*, as truly as is health and strength of body. The two sides of this truth, the Divine and the human, are brought together in, "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)—it is *God* who works in the believer both the desire and performance in using the means, so that all ground for boasting is removed from him. When God begins His work of grace in a soul the heart then turns to Him in penitence and faith, and as He *continues* that work the soul is kept in the exercise of its graces. As we seek to unfold this theme our emphasis will change from time to time according as we have before us those who *repudiate* it and those who *pervert* it—when we shall treat of the Divine foundations on which it rests or the safeguards by which it is protected. O for wisdom to steer clear of both Arminianism and Antinomianism!—A.W.P.

ETERNAL PUNISHMENT.

Our lot is cast in a day when the truth of the eternal punishment of Christ-despisers has almost entirely disappeared from the pulpit, for though a verse or two thereon may occasionally be quoted in some places, where shall we go to hear a whole sermon on the subject? Some imagine that it is impolite to mention Hell but shall we pretend unto a refinement superior to the Scriptures? Some say sinners are not to be terrified into Heaven but won by the cooing of love: then why did the Lord Jesus speak so often of “the fire that never shall be quenched”? Others argue that such preaching would drive the people from the churches—fidelity and not popularity should be our aim. Certain preachers seek to excuse themselves on the pretext that the subject is so unspeakably awful they do not feel in a suitable frame of soul to handle it—then they should retire into their closets and beg God to fit their souls for the task and come not out till He does so.

It is far more than a mere coincidence that side by side with the disappearing of the truth of eternal punishment from the pulpit there is also the departing of the Spirit’s presence and power from the churches. We have heard it said, It is not the Spirit’s way to drive, but to draw. Yet *Christ* did not say that when the Paraclete should come He would “woo the world.” No, rather did He declare, “He will *convict* the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment” (John 16:8). Nevertheless the Spirit is pleased to use means—the Truth proclaimed by God’s servants. And what is better suited to beget in careless and callous souls a fear of sin and evil-doing than for the pulpit to announce in plain terms the fearful retribution which awaits the same? If the preacher maintains a studied and guilty silence thereon, on what ground shall the Spirit convict his hearers of their dire peril and their urgent need of fleeing from the wrath to come?

Side by side with the Spirit’s departure from the churches is the withdrawal of His restraining hand from the world. The masses have become bolder and more brazen in wrong-doing and protests against their iniquities fewer and weaker. Crimes which formerly were dealt with severely have become gradually tolerated and winked at. Criminals are no longer regarded as rebels who must be made to feel the majesty of the law but are looked upon as objects of pity who should be reformed by gentle treatment. Corporal punishment has been banished from the schools. First offenders are let off with a “warning.” Lawbreakers are lightly fined instead of being sent to prison. Murderers are frequently reprieved. A generation has arisen which has no conscience of sin, no fear of the hereafter, no regard for the rights of others—who give free rein to their lusts and are quite indifferent as to what anyone thinks of or says to them.

There are more and more sound preachers expressing shock at the rising tide of evil—but what are they doing to stem it? They express their horror at the lawlessness which now abounds on every side but how far are they conscious that they and their unfaithful predecessors are largely responsible for it? If the foundations are removed what shall the righteous do? and if the awful doom awaiting the unrighteous be concealed from them, if they are encouraged to believe they may sin with comparative impunity, then what remains to check them in their sinning with both hands and drinking in iniquity like water? The *mercy* of God has been stressed and His justice ignored. His *love* has been emphasized and His wrath concealed. His character as Father has been exalted and His *office* as Judge disregarded—there are scarcely any now left who believe “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:31).

Almost two hundred years ago conditions in Britain and America were well nigh as bad as they are today. The churches were as dead and heretical. Wickedness abounded in high places. The Sabbath was profaned on all sides. The masses were utterly indifferent to the claims of the Most High. And what was the turning point? What was it that produced such a radical change for the better? What was the chief means used by God when the Enemy had come in like a flood? The records of history give a plain answer. The Lord was pleased to raise up a handful of men who went forth proclaiming that God, "hatest all workers of iniquity" (Psa. 3:5) and that "the wicked shall be turned into Hell" (Psa. 9:17). Whitefield and his fellows in this country and Jonathan Edwards and his companions in New England dwelt mainly on the terrors of *Hell*, and the masses were sobered, the churches revived, and many were turned unto God.

The Divine promise is, "them that honour Me I will honour" (1 Sam. 2:30) and God is not honoured by those who caricature Him and convey a false conception of His perfections. God is honoured by those who shun not to declare "*all* His counsel" and not by those who withhold those parts of it which are most distasteful to flesh and blood. God was superlatively honoured by His incarnate Son, and none ever portrayed the doom awaiting the damned in such vivid colours and unmistakable terms as He did. He who shall Himself be the Judge of the quick and the dead spoke of "the resurrection of damnation" (John 5:29) and announced that He will say unto the lost, "Depart from Me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the Devil and his angels" (Matt. 25:41). He it was who asked the Pharisees, "How can ye escape the damnation of Hell?" (Matt. 23:33). He it was that told of "the furnace of fire" where "there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth" (Matt. 13:42). What right has any minister to be regarded as a servant of Christ's if he is silent on such matters?

When the Lord Jesus commissioned His servants to "go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature," He immediately added, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not *shall be damned*" (Mark 16:16). It is a great mistake to suppose that threats and terrors pertain alone to the Law of Sinai. Not so—a fearful punishment is annexed to the despising of *the Gospel*. Said the chief of the Apostles, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3). That there might be no uncertainty on the point, he declared in this same Epistle: "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much *sorer punishment*, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy who hath trodden underfoot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith He was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know Him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense saith the Lord" (Heb. 10:28-30). And again, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused Him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from Heaven" (12:25).

Eternal punishment is an essential part of the Gospel message and they who withhold it deal deceitfully with the souls of men and keep back an integral portion of the whole counsel of God. It is meet that the Gospel should be armed with solemn threats as well as attended with gracious promises. It is honouring to Christ, the Author and Center of the Gospel, that it should be so. Christ is *King* of Zion, and a sceptre without a sword, a crown without a rod of iron would be impotent and useless. He has been given both. God has said to His ascended and enthroned Son, "Rule Thou in the midst of Thine enemies"

(Psa. 110:2). "Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Psa. 2:9). And it is because He has been invested with such power that the rulers of the earth are told to "Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling: Kiss the Son, lest He be angry and ye perish from the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little" (Psa. 2:10-12). "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the Gospel" (2 Thess. 1:7, 8).

We have by no means exhausted the contents of the Gospel by presenting Christ on the Cross as a Saviour for sinners, nor by proclaiming Him as the great High Priest who ever lives to make intercession for those who come unto God by Him. He must *also* be magnified as "King of kings and Lord of lords" who shall one day vindicate His honour and make a footstool of His enemies. He shall come forth in righteousness to "judge and make war," having eyes "as a flame of fire." "Out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it He should smite the nations and He shall rule them with a rod of iron, and He treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God" (Rev. 19:11-16). It is therefore the duty of the evangelist to plainly warn the rejecters of Christ that He is unto them "a saviour of death unto death" (2 Cor. 2:16)—that is, the sentence of death passed upon them by the Law shall be aggravated by the additional wrath they incur because of their contempt of the Gospel.

A few words now upon the spirit in which this subject needs to be taken up. It becomes us to approach such a theme with *deep solemnity* of soul. Everything in the Word of Truth is sacred and calls for sobriety and seriousness of attention. But surely among all that God has been pleased to reveal to us, there is nothing which, in its own nature, is so calculated to produce profound awe as Jehovah's announcements of His purposed vengeance on the rebels against His government—the revelation of the righteous wrath of the Almighty. A careless and flippant attitude ill-becomes either speaker or hearer on such a subject as this. Yet in no hesitant and excusing manner should the pulpit treat of it. This doctrine needs no apology on our part but a bold yet reverent witnessing thereto. If the preacher reminds himself that it is nothing but sovereign grace which has plucked him as a brand from the everlasting burnings, he will be delivered from speaking thereon in an unholy manner.

This is a subject which requires to be examined and handled *dispassionately*. Unless all prejudice is banished from our minds we shall view it through distorted lenses. Surely it ill-becomes worms of the dust to take their place at the feet of Infinite Wisdom, all the time determined to hold fast their own foregone conclusions. What more impious than to pretend to examine God's written revelation that we may learn His mind, when we have already predetermined the matter? A Puritan said that we ought to bring our mind to God's Word as blank paper is brought to the printing press, that it may receive only the impressions of the type. We need to get away from all systems of theology, abandon all prejudices and preconceptions, and seek only "What saith the Lord?" We need to approach this awe-inspiring subject in the attitude of little children, saying to God, "That which I see not teach Thou me."

This is a subject which needs to be investigated in a spirit of *confiding submission*. It is not at all a matter of what do the majority of professing Christians believe thereon. Nor is it a question of what appears to us to be most in accord with God's revealed character. It is not for us to decide what shall best vindicate the Divine benevolence and wisdom.

How can the finite determine what most becomes Him who is Infinite? He who has known and believed the love of God will not question His love because he is unable to reconcile with it all that he is taught of God to believe. If I am incapable of understanding how an omniscient, omnipotent, infinitely holy and benevolent God should permit sin to enter this world, with all its attendant woes, then why should I be staggered by my inability to perceive the need for the penalty of everlasting punishment being passed upon those who die in their sins? There is much in God's present Providences we cannot understand, yet we know that the Judge of all the earth does right and in the confidence of that fact we may trustfully bow to His decisions in the Day of Judgment.

I. Its Inflicter.

The One who passes sentence of eternal punishment upon the lost is the Lord God—in the exercise of His *vindictive justice*. Vindictory justice is that perfection in the Divine character which inclines God to punish sin according to its deserts, to render unto it the wages which are its due thereby clearing His own honour and establishing the majesty of His Law. The manifestative glory of God has been greatly sullied in this world. Consider Him as *Creator*. The greatest of His works in this mundane sphere is man, yet scarcely was he called into existence than he revolted against his Maker. Consider Him as the *Ruler* of this world. His laws have been made known only to be treated with utter contempt by those who have received them. Consider Him as the *Gracious One*. He sent forth His own dear Son into this world on a mission of mercy but the world hated and crucified Him. Nor was that crime peculiar to the men of the first century A.D., for by each succeeding generation of men since then Christ has been “despised and rejected.”

Now is the Most High to be mocked with impunity? Shall He regard with indifference the despising of His authority and the contempt of His grace? Are His majesty, His holiness, His omnipotence but empty titles? Shall His enemies defy Him forever? No, He has appointed a Day when He shall exonerate Himself and vindicate His great name. That solemn day has already been anticipated in part. From time to time God has interposed and given plain proof of His hatred of sin and His wrath upon sinners. At the beginning sentence was passed upon Adam and Eve and they were driven out of the garden of Eden. In the fearful flood sent in the days of Noah God made manifest His detestation of evil. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah are “set forth for an example” of those who shall yet suffer “the vengeance of eternal fire” (Jude 7). In the drowning of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea the Lord evidenced the certain fate of all who shall fling themselves against the bosses of His buckler.

Yet fearful as have been God's judgments in the past they are but portents and a faint shadowing forth of that which is yet to come. They were for the most part local but finally shall be upon *all the wicked*. They were only upon the bodies of men, but shall be upon their souls as well. They were merely temporal but shall be eternal. “Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them” (Psa. 21:8, 9). How little are the masses aware of what a terrible and loathsome thing *sin* is in the sight of the ineffably Holy One. The great multitudes all around us regard sin as a mere trifle, as though it were but a thing of today which would never come up against them in the future. They go on

unconcernedly peacefully in their iniquities, as though God had no Book of Remembrance in which is recorded their every word and deed.

In His Word God has plainly made it known that He is not going to ignore the transgressions of His righteous Law but rather that He will judge every defiant rebel. "See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God with Me: I kill, and I make alive, I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of My hand. For I lift up My hand to Heaven, and say, I live forever. If I whet My glittering sword and Mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to Mine enemies, and will reward them that hate Me. I will make Mine arrows drunk with blood, and My sword shall devour flesh; and that with the blood of the slain and of the captives, from the beginning of revenges upon the enemy" (Deut. 12:39-42). That is the Lord's own solemn declaration, yet for all that is ever heard of it from the pulpit, it might not be in the Scriptures. Nevertheless, it is the declaration of Him who cannot lie and it shall most assuredly be made good in every detail.

Such a passage as the last quoted must not be regarded as revealing some blemish in the Divine character or blot upon His government. The justice of God is as truly a Divine perfection as His mercy, His wrath as His love. Because God is holy, He hates all sin; and because He hates all sin, His anger burns against the sinner. So far from the Scriptures making any attempt to conceal this Divine perfection, they speak *more frequently* of God's anger and wrath than they do of His love and compassion and make no apology for His "fierceness" and "fury." "The LORD is known by the judgment which He executeth" (Psa. 9:16), as truly as His wisdom and power are displayed in the wonders of creation.

When the Most High announced the destruction of the Moabites and Ammonites He said, "I will execute judgments upon Moab, and they shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezek. 25:11). Observe how this striking sentence, "they shall know that I am the LORD" is repeated in connection with His judgment upon Edom (25:14), the Philistines (25:16), Tyre (26:7), etc. Those decimating judgments are represented as conduct worthy of the Holy One, as displays of His vindictive justice.—A.W.P.

DISTRESS OF MIND.

I am sorry to hear lowness of spirits continues to hang upon you: they have been your companions though neither pleasant in themselves nor profitable to the soul. Low spirits are the effects of sin: they are frequently the very workings of unbelief, refusing comfort in the Consolation of Israel through faith in the promises and declarations of the Gospel; and they are an engine by which our adversary the Devil gains more advantage against many serious Christians than by any other of his numberless devices. To what purpose, you will say, are these things mentioned to one who has so much of the unhappy experience of this powerful disease, both in body and mind? I will tell you for what purpose I mention them.

1. I would have you consider them as your sinful infirmity, and that you feel them to be exceeding sinful. 2. Consider your low spirits as an occasion of much hurt and disquiet to your soul; they rob it of present peace and expose you to many temptations in that melancholy disposition. You cannot set a proper value upon the grace of God which bringeth salvation; you do not trust yourself upon the Lord and stay yourself upon your God; you do not in hope believe against hope. How much loss does your soul sustain as to its peace and spiritual interests, by such a disposition! 3. I mention these to stir you up under the felt sense of great guilt, deep pollution, utter unworthiness, weakness and treachery, to essay taking hold of God's Everlasting Covenant made with His dear Son, and richly freighted with all the mercy your condition stands in need of and all the grace your most enlarged wishes can desire; for this Covenant is the storehouse of all the mercy of God, this Covenant is the conveyance of all grace and of all spiritual blessings to you and me. Yes, to you and me is the conveyance of the grace of God, as well-pleased in His Son to sinners, to enemies, to the stout-hearted, to backsliders, to the wretched and miserable. Are not these our characters? Surely they are. Is not the Covenant of Grace the conveyance of Christ and all spiritual blessings to sinners of these descriptions? Yes, it seems to be the design of the Scriptures to set wide open a door of hope for such wretched sinners, and so, for you and me.

Now in the consideration of all this good which the God of all grace is showing us, what doth He require of us to take hold of His Covenant? To take hold of His Covenant of free and rich grace, to approve of its infinitely wise and merciful constitution, to accept of and rest upon Christ as our righteousness, as the alone paymaster of all our enormous debt; to view the promises of the new Covenant as promises of eternal life in Christ to *us*, and to esteem this Covenant, whose condition Christ fully performed and whose promises God will surely fulfill, all our salvation, resolving to hope in it, to live in it, to seek and expect comfort, holiness, grace and glory in no other way. Thus let us take hold of it and endeavour to keep hold of it. The Christian life has a close connection with our keeping fast hold of the Covenant of Promise. It is not a continued summer with our earth; yet we are sure, even in the coldest frost and in the longest nights of winter that the spring and summer will return, because God hath made a Covenant concerning their succession; even so in the Christian life it is very usual for the heirs of salvation to be in sorrow and fear, in great bondage, to have cold and dark winter nights. But when the saints live and walk by faith, they set their foot upon the stable rock of Jehovah's promise, and smile for joy in the pleasant assurance that His Word will be made good to them at last; and in the meantime that their strength shall be proportioned to the day of trial. This is the way we should endeavour to live in this howling wilderness, who have not yet come

to rest in the immediate presence of God and the Lamb. Does iniquity abound with us; we have a sweet passage in Micah 7:18-20. Does Satan terrify us? We have some delightful expressions in Isaiah 59:16-20, and in 49:24-26. Have we treacherously departed from the Lord? and do we fear our case is so desperately bad that it shall never be better? Every syllable in Jeremiah 3 and Hosea 14 is sweetly suited to such a view of ourselves. Is Providence dark and lowering? Matthew 6:19-34 is remarkable comforting; so are Psalms 91 and 107. Whatever be our condition, the 119th Psalm is both a source and pattern of proper exercise.—A. Hall, 1777.

