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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow in their influence upon God’s people around the world, through their clarity, careful exposition, and Christ-centeredness.

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

OLD THINGS

1. *Old sins.* “But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins” (2Pe 1:9). Those words occur in a passage of deep importance practically. Verses 5-7 contain an exhortation for the Christian to give all diligence to the cultivation of his graces, and verses 8 and 9 describe the results of a compliance or non-compliance therewith. There is no remaining stationary in the spiritual life. If we do not advance, we backslide. The “these things” in verses 8 and 9 are the seven graces enumerated in 5-7. To “lack” them is not necessarily to be totally devoid of the same, but to be careless and remiss concerning them—as *not to use* the grace already bestowed is, in the language of Scripture, not having it (Luk 8:18; Mat 25:29). I only possess as much truth as really possesses me—influences and regulates me. Regeneration imposes an obligation to cultivate our spiritual life to the utmost possible extent, to exercise the greatest diligence in striving after holiness and fruitfulness. If we fail to do so, then our growth will quickly be arrested. As yet, there may be nothing wrong in the outward life, but there is an inward torpor and non-enjoyment of God and the things of God, and sad will be the consequences.

“He that lacketh these things is blind.” Not absolutely so, as is the case with the unregenerate, but relatively, as is indicated in the clause immediately following. Clearness or dimness of spiritual vision is inseparably connected with a holy or unholy life. As our Lord declared, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). To follow Christ is to commit ourselves unreservedly unto His guidance, both in doctrine and in practice, to be regulated by the example He has left us, to yield to His authority and be governed by His precepts. By so doing, we have “the light of life”—not only an illuminated path, perception of our duty, but joy of soul. Or, keeping more closely to the language of the context, clearness or dimness of spiritual vision is determined by the extent to which we heed or ignore the exhortation of verses 5-

7. There is a mist over divine and eternal things when faith is not in exercise, and we become near-sighted. This is clear from the contrast presented between “cannot see afar off,” and “These all died in faith, not having received the [fulfilment of the] promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them and embraced them” (Heb 11:13). Just as our Lord said of believing and obedient Abraham, he “rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it [thousands of years beforehand], and was glad” (Joh 8:56). He enjoyed “the light of life” (Joh 8:12).

“And hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins.” That statement clearly implies that the Lord’s people ought not to forget such a favour, that there is a danger of their so doing, yea, that if a certain course be followed such will be the outcome. If they yield to, instead of mortify, their lusts, the understanding will be darkened, the conscience will become calloused, the affections cold. The “forgotten” here, like the “blindness” of the first clause, is not to be understood absolutely, but relatively, for the divine forgiveness of sins is a blissful experience which is never totally erased from consciousness while memory is retained. What then is signified? This—There is a *practical* “forgetting.” Neglect of the means of grace and carelessness of our conduct are utterly incompatible with a heart realization of the awful costliness of that sacrifice by which alone sin can be purged. Hence, the closeness of the connection between the two things. If I turn again to folly (Psa 85:8) and fashion my ways according to the former lusts (1Pe 1:14), I shall be purblind, deficient in discernment, dim of vision, with no clear sight of heaven and things to come, in the sense that they have any power to move and mould me. Likewise, Calvary and its pardoning mercy will no longer engage my thoughts. Such a one needs to repent, return to Christ, and beg Him to anoint his eyes with eye-salve that he may see clearly again (Rev 3:18).

But, alas, our lot is cast in a day when sin is regarded lightly, and even many professing Christians refer to their early lives with little or no apparent sense of shame and self-abhorrence. Yet this is scarcely to be wondered at, for there are preachers (styling themselves “Bible teachers”) who tell the Lord’s people that God remembers their sins and iniquities no more, and that *they* should not do so. But that by no means follows. Though God has forgiven me, I can never forgive myself for my past wickedness. Yea, if I grow in grace, I shall have a deeper realization of its enormity. Sins *are to be* called to mind, for my humbling, my watchfulness against a repetition thereof, my gratitude for the amazing grace that cleansed one so foul. “Thou shalt remember thy ways, and be ashamed” (Eze 36:31). So too the New Testament calls upon us to remember what we were “in time past” (Eph 2:11-12), that repentance may be deepened by a renewed sense of the same. If we do not, God is likely to suffer the devil to terrify the conscience by reviving the burden of old sins. “Remember not the sins of my youth,” prayed David (Psa 25:7), which was not only an acknowledgment of the same, but a suitable petition when the chastening rod of God be upon us. Poor Job was made to possess the iniquities of his youth (Job 13:26).

4. *Old bottles.* “And no man putteth new wine into old bottles: else the new wine will burst the bottles, and be spilled, and the bottles shall perish” (Luk 5:37). The container must be suited to the contents. The bottles here alluded to were of skin—bladders—and when new wine fermented, they would burst. It was an emblematical representation of the impossibility of a conjunction between the new covenant and the old one, which was ready

to vanish away (Heb 8:13). Christ had come to inaugurate a better economy than the Mosaic, and Judaism was quite unable to contain the blessings and privileges of Christianity. The untenability of such a fusion of them is shown in Galatians. But our Lord's figure has also an *individual* application and illustrates the necessity of regeneration. The heart must be renewed before it is fitted to receive spiritual things. Grace cannot be acceptable to a self-righteous person, nor the humbling principles of the Gospel to pride. The pure milk of the Word (1Pe 2:2) is repulsive to those who crave the things of this world. Love has no room in a heart filled with enmity. Comfort is for those who mourn. Holiness is not suited to the carnal man, nor can spiritual duties be performed by those who are unspiritual.

5. *Old things*. "Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2Co 5:17). Probably there is not a verse in the New Testament less understood than that, nor one which has occasioned the saints so much anguish, through their misapprehension of it. It is commonly applied to regeneration, but Christian experience uniformly refutes such a view, for it finds to its sorrow that those words describe neither all things without nor all things within them, the godliest having to lament, "When I would do good, evil is present with me" (Rom 7:21). The believer discovers that evil thoughts and imaginations *still* beset him, that old inclinations and temptations are still present, that sinful lusts and desires constantly harass, and, though he prays against and resists them, he still yields to old habits. But 11 Corinthians 5:17 describes not an inward change, but a *dispensational one*—the old covenant giving way to the new, Judaism being displaced by Christianity. The "middle wall of partition" (Eph 2:14) between Jew and Gentile has passed away. So too have circumcision, the pascal feast, the Levitical priesthood, the seventh-day Sabbath. "All things are become new" (2Co 5:17), baptism, the Lord's supper, Christ's priesthood and the Lord's day taking their places.

6. *Olden times*. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this" (Ecc 7:10)—the Hebrew word for "former" is rendered "old time" in 11 Samuel 20:18. In view of those plain words, how many of our readers can plead guiltless? We wonder what percentage of them definitely realized there was such a prohibition in God's Word. Anyone who has read extensively knows that in every century and each generation men have spoken of "the good old days," and referred to their own as "hard" or "evil" times. In most instances, it was owing to ignorance of the past and a spirit of peevishness in the present. Human nature has been the same all through history. In every age, the mercies of God have far outnumbered His judgments. It is an undervaluing of our blessings, proneness to murmur against divine providence, which make us draw odious comparisons. Here too let us forget the things which are behind and press forward unto those before (Phi 3:12-14).

7. *Old age*. This is something which is contemplated with dismay by the majority of human beings, for they realize it will put a period to indulging in carnal pleasures. But such should be far from the case with the believer, for each year that passes brings him that much nearer an entrance into heaven. Yes, but it also means increasing infirmities, and perhaps total helplessness. By no means always so, for many retain their faculties to the end. Yet even so, has not God promised, "Even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you"

(Isa 46:4)? Say with the Psalmist, “My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever” (73:26). And remember 11 Corinthians 4:16.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN’S FIRST EPISTLE

27. *The World Doomed (2:17)*

“And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.”

“Love not the world” (2:15): either its policies or its pleasures, its maxims or its methods, its trends or its ends. Refuse all intimacy with its subjects. That prohibition is enforced, first, by the solemn consideration, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” The great Searcher of hearts cannot be deceived: if I am living for the enjoyment of the world and seeking to win its favour, then I am waging warfare against heaven, bidding open defiance to the Lord of hosts (Jam 4:4). Anyone who makes the world his portion or supreme good is dead in sin. It is impossible to keep God’s commandments and to be on good terms with His open enemies.

“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” (2:16). This is the second reason why we are not to love the world: because the principles, which operate therein, and the food which it provides for them to feed upon, are essentially evil. We are forbidden to set our affection upon things, which gratify the carnal nature, which pander to a disordered imagination, and which minister unto pride. The world supplies an elaborate menu for its subjects. There are stalls and shows in Vanity Fair¹ designed by its prince to appeal unto all tastes and temperaments.

It should be pointed out that those three propensities of fallen human nature have had a corporate embodiment in that monstrous system which God has suffered for so long to devour both the souls and bodies of millions of mankind. We refer to “the mother of harlots,” which for the last thousand years has had the effrontery to term herself “The Holy Catholic Church” and “The Bride of Christ.” If there has been any religious organization outstandingly characterized by these three evils, it is undoubtedly the Papacy. What but “the lust of the flesh,” in its grossest form, has marked her gluttonous prelates, the “indulgences” which they sell to their poor dupes, and the moral filth which has obtained in her convents and monasteries—as converted nuns and monks have frequently testified? What are her imposing cathedrals, her elaborate ritual, her gorgeous vestments and her spectacular processions but so many alluring appeals to the “lust of the eyes”? And what are the flattering titles assumed by her dignitaries, the Pope’s usurpation of the alone prerogatives of Christ, and his claim to rule over kings, but clear evidences of “the pride of life”? And the world-

¹ **Vanity Fair** – the town in Bunyan’s *The Pilgrim’s Progress* (1678) that was given over to worldly lusts, governed by the devil, and presented Christian with many difficult temptations and trials.

lier other allegedly “Christian” denominations become, and the closer they draw to Rome, the more conspicuous are the same elements and features in them.

In glorious contrast with what has been before us above, let the child of God ponder and feast upon the blessed ways of Immanuel, and bow in admiration and adoration before Him who differed as much from them as does the light from darkness. When about to descend to this earth, He “made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7). He was born not in a palace, but in a cattle shed. During the years that He remained in this scene, He disdained its pomp, and sought not His happiness in it. Yet the unworldliness of Christ was not that of the hermit, but of One whose ministry was upon the stage of public action, among all classes of people. When He selected the twelve apostles, who were to be His most intimate companions, and later His ambassadors, He chose not the mighty, the noble, or the wise of this world, but humble fishermen and a despised tax-gatherer. So far was He from seeking the limelight that, after He had healed the sick, again and again He bade one and another, “See thou tell no man” (Mat 8:4; 9:30; 12:16). When His brethren after the flesh said, “If thou do these things, show thyself to the world,” He refused their request, and later went up to the feast at Jerusalem “not openly, but as it were in secret” (Joh 7:4, 10)—unannounced, unobtrusively.

After the Lord Jesus Christ had performed many mighty works, and the same had been noised abroad, Simon and his fellows said unto Him, “All men seek for thee,” but He replied, “Let us go into the next towns” (Mar 1:37-38): rather than receive the plaudits of the crowd, He moved on. Instead of courting popularity, He ever shunned it. Said He, “I receive not honour from men” (Joh 5:41). In Mark 7:17, we are told, “And when he was entered into the house from the people” (and cf. 3:19; 9:28, 33)—He went about doing His Father’s business quietly and unostentatiously. Upon His transfiguration, He charged those who beheld it, “Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead” (Mat 17:9). When it became necessary to make a public presentation of His royal claims, He entered Jerusalem not in a chariot, but seated upon an ass—the King of meekness. He averred, “the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me” (Joh 14:30). There was no lust of the flesh, no lust of the eyes, no pride of life working within the Lord Jesus; and therefore naught to which the corrupt things of the world could appeal. Not only so, but positively there was everything in Him to repel them, for He was “the Holy One,” against whom all the shafts of the devil were aimed in vain.

Having explained at some length what is signified by the three evils announced in verse 16, let us return to the apostle’s principal designs in our passage, which were to warn the Lord’s people, and to expose graceless professors for in neither the Old Testament nor the New does God own anyone as a lover of Him save he who keeps His commandments and walks in separation from the world. The Church and the world are sharply distinguished entities, their members two opposing companies. Therefore does God say to the former, “Walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind” (Eph 4:17): instead, they are required to keep themselves “unspotted from the world” (Jam 1:27), “hating even the garment spotted by the flesh” (Jude 23), witnessing against the world (Heb 11:7). The world makes its appeals to all of the bodily senses, but its main object is to capture the heart, for until that citadel be won all its arts and devices have failed; but the moment the heart is taken, man becomes the world’s captive, even though (to borrow the language of

another) “he be bound in the silken fetters of love.” Hence the supreme importance of our complying with the precept, “Keep thy heart with all diligence” (Pro 4:23), for it is the throne where either Christ or Satan rules.

Solomon tells us that “a threefold cord is not quickly broken” (Ecc 4:12), nevertheless the grace of God can and does effectually deliver from the love of pleasure, riches, honours, as appears with more or less clearness among the regenerate. A striking case in point is that of Moses, for we read of his “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin [the lust of the flesh] for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt [the lust of the eyes]...By faith he forsook Egypt,” abandoning his position there as “the son of Pharaoh’s daughter,” thereby disdain[ing] the pride of life (Heb 11:24-27). Note well, my reader, the repeated “by faith” in those verses, for only so far as that grace be healthy and active will the saint be impervious to both the delights and the terrors of the world: “this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1Jo 5:4). Faith occupies the soul with invisible and eternal realities, and as we are engaged with them the things of time and sense lose their hold upon the heart. A sight of “the King in His beauty” and a sense of His dying love are the surest means of breaking their power.

*“I thirst, but not as once I did,
The vain delights of earth to share:
Thy wounds, Emmanuel, all forbid
That I should seek my pleasures there.”*

As the Christian desires to ascertain whether or not he is growing in grace, let him frequently measure himself by this standard: Am I becoming less worldly? He may be innocent of all forms of intemperance and of a spirit of covetousness, he may not envy the prosperity of the wicked or join with them in their vanities, but is he indifferent to their opinion, caring not whether they smile or frown upon him? Is the reader afraid of being called “peculiar” because he ignores its fashions and defies its conventions? Nothing is more pitiful than to see a citizen of heaven in bondage to the whims of Satan’s children: certain it is that if his daily life does not offend them, he is not being faithful to his Master. We shall become less worldly only as our love for God in Christ increases and becomes more vigorous, and therefore, as it is more important to act grace than to be assured that we have it, we should set ourselves with all our might to strengthen our love to the Lord, and then shall we know that we love Him. The example which Christ has left us should make it easier to deny ungodly and worldly lusts. How fully did He manifest His contempt of the world and all the glory thereof! Let us not affect a greater eminence in it than He had. If He was “a Man of sorrows” in this scene, does it become any follower of His to be addicted to its pleasures? If they called Him “Beelzebub” should we compromise in order to escape “bearing His reproach”?

“Is not of the Father, but is of the world.” This is the third dissuasive against setting our affections thereon. Observe, first, that the apostle did not say “is not of God,” but “is not of the Father,” just as in the foregoing verse he had said, “If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.” As the devil is opposed to Christ, the flesh hostile to the Spirit, so the world is antagonistic to the Father and hates His children (3:13). “All that

is in the world...is not of the Father.” The things of the world are termed “the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life” because they are the objects of them: just as the “doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9) is called “the faith” (Gal 1:23; Jude 3), because it is the object of faith. Those three principles are the springs of action in its citizens; all that takes place in this mundane sphere (as considered apart from the Church and the operations of the Spirit) issues from them: every motive-power at work within the ungodly may be traced thereto. In its turn, the world caters fully for and to them. For the first there are carnal delights to entice the soul from the strictness and severity of the Christian profession. For the second there are all kinds of material profits and illicit gains to allure. For the third there are preferments and applause, which the natural man is so fond of. Those sensible objects to which the old nature is so inclined are ever present, seeking to divert the heart from God and heavenly-mindedness.

“*All that is in the world...is not of the Father.*” They are not of His creation, for at the beginning He pronounced all things, including our first parents, “very good.” No, as Christ declared of the field wherein tares were sown after He had sown it with wheat, “an enemy hath done this.” The idolatrous desire after its objects attached not nor pertained to them originally, but resulted from the fall. Nor are they of His infusion: “Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: but every man is tempted, when he is drawn away [from the path of rectitude] of his own lusts” (Jam 1:13-14). All such evil lusting is the outcome of indwelling sin. Nor are they of His preceptive will. He has not provided them for any such purposes, nor prescribed them to be so misused. And certainly such perversity of them is not of His approbation. No, rather are they “of the world” as it “lieth in the wicked one” (5:19), which does not, in either its prince or its subjects, respect God’s laws, acknowledge His claims, or seek to glorify Him. Such unlawful cravings are the effects of man’s apostasy² and subjection to Satan, who now makes whatsoever is in the world to be his baits to seduce men into further sin. Thus, loyalty to God and regard for the welfare of our souls require that such a world be renounced by us, and every inordinate longing after it mortified.

“*And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof*” (verse 17). Here is still another reason why God’s people are not to love the world, an argument drawn from the vain and vanishing state of mundane things and man’s enjoyment of them. Those words may be understood two ways: relatively and absolutely, in regard both to ourselves and itself. In themselves, and in the pleasure which the ungodly derive from them, the things of the world are only transitory and can afford no lasting satisfaction. “The fashion of this world passeth away” (1Co 7:31). There is a “fashion” or outward form, which in its incidentals alters in each age and generation, after which its deluded votaries order their lives, being carried along hither and thither by the ebb and flow of its tides. Its customs and habits, its styles and modes, its pleasures and amusements, are ever varying. Yet it is by this very means that the multitudes are more and more deceived. The objects they sought so eagerly yesterday fulfilled not their expectations, so with equal earnestness they pursue the same or other objects today, assured that the attaining of them will rejoice them; only to find them broken cisterns which hold no water.

² **apostasy** – the state of abandoning the faith one had believed in.

“And the world passeth away.” It is but an amusing pageant: its alluring shows and sights are like a revolving stage, with its scenes changing rapidly, one set of actors soon following another. How frequently do houses and estates change hands. How many a monarchy has been overturned in this century, how many a kingdom had its boundaries altered, how many of its proud cities reduced to rubble. How frequently do riches take to themselves wings and fly away. “Change and decay in all around I see.” Its beauty is only transient, vanishing almost as soon as it appears. Its “fashion” is but an appearance, for there is nothing substantial in it. Its pleasures soon pall: the laughter of fools is compared to “the crackling of thorns under a pot” (Ecc 7:6)—a momentary blaze which disappears in smoke. Its honours are evanescent and disappointing. Its smiles are artificial and fickle. “And the lust thereof” John Calvin (1509-1564) pointed out that “lust” is here used metonymically, as signifying the objects coveted, or the things which captivate the desires of men; the things they deem most precious are but a shadowy phantom, which fails them in the hour of need. The carnal joys of the wicked are like the present sufferings of the saints—relatively “but for a moment,” but instead of working for them “a far more exceeding eternal weight of glory” they issue in everlasting shame and woe.

“The world passeth away” also has reference to its citizens, for “all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass” (1Pe 1:24). All mankind is in a perishing condition, hastening to the grave. The tombstones in our cemeteries bear solemn witness to the brevity of life: far more die in infancy and childhood than in old age. No class is exempt, the wealthy equally with the poor being often cut off in the prime of life. “For the sun is no sooner risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass...so also shall the rich man fade away in his ways” (Jam 1:11). The uncertainty and transiency of mortal life is something which worldlings desire to forget, and therefore do they “put far away the evil day” (Amo 6:3), death being feared by them because it will summon them into the presence of their righteous Judge. The shortness and instability of life are set forth in the Scriptures by many comparisons: the wind (Job 7:7), a leaf before the wind (Job 13:25), a shadow (Job 14:2), the flower of the field (Isa 40:6), “vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (Jam 4:14), so unsubstantial and unreal, so impermanent and soon over, is human life, and all the prosperity, magnificence and enjoyment that may have attended it.

Oh, my reader, at most we have but a little time to spend in this scene, and that little will soon be gone. “Then why set our hearts on worldly enjoyments or why be overwhelmed with earthly cares? Possess what you must shortly leave without allowing yourself to be possessed by it. Why should your hearts be much set on what you must quickly resign?” (S. Brown). Hold loosely all earthly things. Build not your nest in any tree here, for the whole forest is doomed to destruction. Even now the world is under the judgment, the curse, the wrath, of a sin-hating God. That is evident every time we see a funeral, for death is the wages of sin, and daily we behold that grim reaper at work. Neighbours and friends, known and loved by us, are suddenly cut down. Soon the world will pass away absolutely and finally. It is not eternal: it had a beginning, and it will have an end. God has appointed a day when it shall no longer exist to oppose Him; and when that day arrives “the heavens shall pass away with a great noise and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up” (2Pe 3:10), and all its

unsaved inhabitants will be cast into the lake of fire, there to be tormented day and night for ever and ever (Rev 20:10).

“But he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.” It is not, as might be expected from verse 15, “he that loveth God,” but the fruit and proof thereof which is here named, for obedience to God is love in action. Nor is it simply “he that knoweth and [theoretically] approveth the divine will,” but rather the one who actually performs it. This is the grand design and end of God’s work of grace in the soul: to make its subject the doer of His Word. The saint is here viewed not as an object of God’s everlasting love, nor as one for whom Christ purchased redemption, but rather as one who has been transformed by the renewing of his mind and made an obedient child. This is very searching. As Peter declared, “God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him,” (Act 10:35-36). And as his Master taught, “For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother” (Mat 12:50); “blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it” (Luk 11:28); “they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life” (Joh 5:29). “Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life” (Rev 22:14). Such passages as those are almost universally ignored by Antinomians, who are forever crying up grace at the expense of holiness.

“He that doeth the will of God”: not grudgingly but heartily; not bits of it, but the whole. Such is the character and conduct of Wisdom’s children—the very opposite of the worldling’s. They willingly submit to God’s authority, seek to please Him in their daily lives, walk in the Law of the Lord. Not flawlessly so, but evangelically, sincerely, so that of his deviations therefrom the believer can honestly say, “That which I do I allow not” (Rom 7:15), condemning himself for, mourning over and penitently confessing the same. There is no such thing as sinless perfection in this life, either in being entirely rid of love for the things of the world or in doing the will of God. But “he that doeth the will of God” is characteristic of a Christian. And such a one “abideth for ever,” which imports far more than personal continuance (for such will be the case with all the unregenerate), namely in the favour of God and shall be eternally blessed. He shall abide for ever in the possession of that substantial good which he has been enabled to make choice of. Such a one is the heir of eternal life, a member of that kingdom which cannot be shaken. Durable riches are his, a crown of glory awaits him, fullness of joy and pleasures for evermore at God’s right hand.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

79. *Our Inheritance, Part 1*

In our last, we virtually confined our attention to a consideration of the method appointed by God for the distribution of Canaan among the tribes of Israel—that of Levi being exempted therefrom. That method was “the lot,” and however casual and contingent

the casting thereof might seem to man, it was divinely certain, for “the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD” (Pro 16:33), so that His will was infallibly made known thereby. All important matters of order under the divine theocracy were thus determined. Hence, we find king Saul making request of the Lord God, “give a perfect lot” (1Sa 14:41). The cities in which the sons of Aaron and their families were to dwell were determined by lot (1Ch 6:63), so too were the sacred singers of the divine worship (1Ch 25:7-8). Likewise, in Nehemiah’s day, those who were to reside in Jerusalem were chosen by lot (Neh 11:1). In case of rival claims, the different parties agreed to abide by its decision, and thus, “The lot causeth contentions to cease, and parteth between the mighty” (Pro 18:18).

The practical application which is to be made unto ourselves of the above principle is that God does not leave secondary causes to their work as an idle spectator, but interposes and orders all the affairs of our lives. As an old writer quaintly expressed it, “Notwithstanding all our blowing, the fire will not burn without the Lord.” “Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psa 127:1). As the apportioning of Canaan was entirely by divine determination, so are the bounds of our habitation fixed, and in whatever way our position and portion in this world be assigned or acquired by us, we should regard the same as coming from the Lord, and be thankful for and contented with it. One of the secrets of tranquility of mind and happiness of heart is for us to be grateful and joyful for what God *has* so graciously given us, instead of lusting after and repining over those things which He wisely withholds. “Godliness with contentment is great gain...and having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1Ti 6:6, 8).

As the portion which JEHOVAH appointed, promised, and gave unto Abraham and his descendants, the land of Canaan has, all through this Christian era, been rightly regarded as figuring the heavenly Canaan, unto which the members of Christ are now journeying as they pass through this scene of sin and trial. Rightly, so we say, for in the first place, the New Testament refers often to the everlasting bliss of God’s people as *an inheritance* (Eph 1:13-14). The evangelical commission which Paul received from the Lord unto the Gentiles was “to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me” (Act 26:18). And therefore did he bid the Colossians give “thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light” (Col 1:12). In Hebrews 9:15, he termed it the “eternal inheritance”; while Peter assured the saints that they had been begotten “to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you” (1Pe 1:4).

In the second place, Canaan was given to Israel *on the ground of the covenant* which JEHOVAH made with Abraham (Exo 6:4; Psa 105:9-11). In like manner, our heritage of blessing and glory is bestowed upon us in consequence of the everlasting covenant of grace. God and the Mediator agreed together in counsel for the accomplishment of a common end—to further the manifested glory of God and to secure the salvation of His people. In Zechariah 6:13, we read, “And the counsel of peace shall be between them both,” the reference being to JEHOVAH and the Man, whose name is The BRANCH, of the previous verse. That “counsel of peace” signifies the compact between Them. Or the fulfilment of

certain conditions by the Mediator, God stipulated to reward Him and His seed. That everlasting covenant is the foundation of all the good which God does to His people (Luk 1:68-72; Heb 13:20-21). His promises unto them were made to their Surety, on whose behalf He transacted. A remarkable proof of this is found in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* [not simply "purposed"] before the world began"—promised Christ that He would bestow eternal life (another name for the "inheritance"—Mat 25:34) upon all His seed.

In the third place, the everlasting portion of Christians is not only an "inheritance," but *an allotted one*. This is taught plainly in Ephesians 1:11, though a careful comparison of other passages is required in order to discern the real meaning and force of that verse. Since most of the Lord's people are unacquainted with the same, it will be necessary for us to enter into some detail. In verses 3-9, the apostle had spoken of election, of adoption to glory (or an inheritance), of redemption, and of vocation. Then in verse 10, he stated that the design of the whole of the foregoing was that God should head up or gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven (the angels) and (the redeemed) which are on earth. In verses 11-13, this is amplified and explained. First, he refers to Jewish believers, and says, "In whom [Christ, the Head] also *we* have obtained an inheritance," or a part in that grand "gathering together" into one in Christ. Then in verse 13, he alludes to the Gentiles, "In whom *ye also* trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation," for it is not until his conversion that any soul actually obtains either an interest in or meetness for the inheritance.

The "we have obtained an inheritance" is a single word—a compound one—in the original, and is derived from *kleros*, concerning which that eminent Greek scholar and exegete Charles Hodge (1797-1878) said, "The word *kleros* means to cast lots, to distribute by lot, to choose by lot, and, in the middle voice, to obtain by lot or inheritance or simply to obtain." Our own study has confirmed that, first, *kleros* signifies a part or portion in a thing, to be a partaker with others therein, and it is so rendered in Acts 1:17, 25. Thus, the saints have a part in that gathering together of all things in Christ. Second, *kleros* signifies an inheritance, and is so rendered in Hebrews 1:4—"heritage" in 1 Peter 5:3. Third, *kleros* signifies a lot, being so translated seven times: Matthew 27:35, etc.; Acts 1:26. Thus, by combining those three meanings, we get a part or portion, which part or portion is an inheritance, and this inheritance comes to us by lot, as did that of the Hebrews, "Ye shall divide the land by lot for an inheritance" (Num 33:54, and see Eze 45:1), and therefore it is called "the lot of our inheritance" (Num 36:3).

It is also to be observed that the verbal noun of Ephesians 1:11 (for a verb it is) is a *passive* one, importing that the inheritance has been *bestowed upon* us, and is not something actively acquired by us. The word is used in the passive voice when we say a man is *disinherited*, but we have no English word that answers thereto to say a man is *inherited*, so we supply a word and say he is *endowed with* an inheritance. The Christian's inheritance is not something he has earned by his own efforts, nor is it even sought by him, but is conferred upon him gratuitously. We obtained an inheritance in Christ, were made joint heirs with Him, before we were aware of it. In some cases, this is much more evident than in others, as with those who are utterly unconcerned about their souls' eternal welfare being suddenly and quite unexpectedly apprehended by Christ—like Saul of Tarsus. Yet in

reality, it is so in *every* case, for Christ took the initiative in seeking out and working upon the ones who became anxious seekers after Him, for did not God first quicken the dead in sins, none would ever make a movement towards Him. Yet they know no more about that quickening than a man asleep would of obtaining an inheritance then bequeathed to him.

Thus it turns out under the preaching of the Gospel and those who hear the same. The lot falls on some and passes by others. One may attend out of idle curiosity and be arrested by God the first sermon he hears. As Zacchaeus, being little, climbed up into a tree, that he might get a glimpse of the miracle-worker who was passing that way, yet Christ said unto him, "Make haste, and come down...This day is salvation come to this house" (Luk 19:1-10). While regular attenders are left to themselves. "Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage" (Mat 22:9). Every saint is divinely ordained, yet to human perception things are carried out casually, as if grace comes to them by lot—even as Saul merely went forth to seek his father's asses, but before he arrived back home had been anointed king of Israel (1Sa 9:3-10:27). The hearers of Christ's forerunner went to view a novelty, as they would go to a show (Luk 7:24-25), yet under his call to repentance, many of their hearts were turned to God.

The above remarks receive definite confirmation in 11 Peter 1:1, where the apostle addresses himself to "them that have *obtained* like precious faith with us." For the Greek word there used also signifies "to obtain by lot" (Young's Concordance), being the same one as is rendered "*his lot was to burn incense*" (Luk 1:9). By using that term, Peter would remind his readers that if they had really believed to the saving of their souls, they were indebted for their faith not at all to their own superior sagacity but solely to the sovereign dispositions of divine grace. In the distribution of His favours, that blessed portion had fallen to their share. Thus 11 Peter 1:1 is one of many verses which teach us that saving faith is a *gift* from God, and not a product of the creature's will. All room for boasting is excluded (1Co 4:7). It is the divine lot which makes believer differ from unbeliever!

It is not simply predestination which gives a soul a right to the divine inheritance, but a divine work—a work of grace on the heart—which is the effect of predestination. So teaches the apostle in Ephesians 1:12-14. It was *after* they heard the Gospel, "after that ye believed," that they were sealed by the Holy Spirit of promise, "which is the earnest of our inheritance." It is not until we are converted that we obtain a personal interest in the inheritance. This is clear from Acts 26:18, for Christ sent forth Paul to preach in order to turn men "from darkness unto light...that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified [set apart from unbelievers] by faith that is in me." Simon Magus was told frankly, "Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter." And why? Because he was an impenitent and unpardoned soul (Act 8:21-22). We have to be made meet by the gracious operations of the Spirit before we become partakers of the inheritance (Col 1:12). Likewise does 1 Peter 1:3-4 expressly inform us that we must be begotten of God ere we have a saving and experiential interest in the heavenly inheritance.

After stating that those who are converted have obtained an inheritance or "part" in the gathering together into one of all things in Christ, the apostle then traced this unspeakable blessing back to *its source*, "being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will" (Eph 1:11). God has sent forth the Gospel

on no uncertain mission, but whenever and by whomsoever it be preached, it shall not return unto Him void (Isa 55:11), but accomplish that which He pleases and prosper in the thing whereto He sent it—all the forces of evil being powerless to prevent it. It is not left to human caprice, the wills of those who hear it, and though it comes to men by “lot” (which to the eye of man appears to be wholly a matter of chance), yet that lot is directed by God’s eternal predestination. And though the favoured ones on which the lot falls be by nature as alienated from God and as dead in sin as those whom the lot passes by, nevertheless their effectual calling and conversion is accomplished by Him who works all things after the counsel of His own will.

Many of God’s people rejoice and give thanks unto Him for His bringing them from death unto life, working repentance and faith in them, and granting them a saving interest in Christ; but fail to perceive that those acts of the divine mercy are the consequents and fruits of God’s eternal choice and foreordination of them unto eternal life and glory (Act 13:48; 2Th 2:13-14). The order of the divine procedure is clearly stated in Romans 8, “For whom he did foreknow, he also predestinated to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn [chief] among many brethren” (verse 29). Foreknowledge there is the knowledge of approbation, as in “The LORD knoweth the way of the righteous” (Psa 1:6), “You only have I known of all the families of the earth” (Amo 3:2, and see Rom 11:2). The distinction between foreknowledge and predestination is this—the divine foreknowledge is of the *persons* selected and approved. The predestination is the appointing of the *blessings* designed them. The next verse shows how that grand purpose of God is accomplished, “Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified” (Rom 8:30).

Thus, God’s electing grace and sovereign purpose are the ground and root of all that follows. Many other passages teach the same thing. “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: *therefore* with lovingkindness have I drawn thee” (Jer 31:3). All of God’s dealings with His people in time are the outworking of His decrees concerning them in eternity past. “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). He who determined the end also appointed and provided the means thereto. “Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works [either actual or foreseen, for we have no good ones except those which He produces in and through us], but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2Ti 1:9). Now observe how strong and emphatic is the language of Ephesians 1:11, “In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.” Not only predestinated to that inheritance, but according to divine purpose, which expresses the certainty and immutability thereof; and that the decree of Him who effectually works all things after the contrivance of His own pleasure, none being able to withstand Him.

In the fourth place, the allotment of Israel’s inheritance was conveyed through the exercise of *the priest’s office*. “And these are the countries which the children of Israel inherited in the land of Canaan, which Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun, and the heads of the fathers of the tribes of the children of Israel, distributed for inheritance to them” (Jos 14:1). Since a solemn appeal was to be made unto God for the knowledge of

His will, the presence of the high priest with his Urim and Thummim was necessary. Accordingly, Eleazar, the son and successor of Aaron (Deu 10:6), is here mentioned, and that *before* Joshua. By thus giving him the precedence, signal honour was placed upon the priesthood. Therein we behold once more the beauty and the accuracy of the type, though ours is an age of such spiritual ignorance that few today perceive this. The careful student of the New Testament will have observed that the priesthood of Christ is there given a prominence which is accorded unto neither His prophetic nor His kingly office. Nor is that in the least surprising, for it was the very end of His incarnation “that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people” (Heb 2:17).

There was obviously no necessity for the assumption of human nature by the Son of God if the only results to be achieved thereby were the publication of truths undiscoverable by the efforts of human reason and the promulgation of laws invested with the authority of God, for prophets and apostles were quite competent (by divine endowment) to perform such offices. But the mediation of Christ rendered it requisite and fitting that it should assume the peculiar form of *priesthood*, so that His death might be not only a satisfaction unto justice, but a sweet-smelling sacrifice—a free-will offering unto God. It is most important to recognize that Christ’s redemptive work was a priestly one. This has been denied by Socinians, and it is sad to find some who believe in Christ’s deity adopting the vain reasoning of “Unitarians” concerning the sacerdotal nature of the Saviour’s oblation. The New Testament represents Christ not only as priest, but as the great High Priest of His people, and if the character, purpose and scope of that office be interpreted in the light of the Old Testament types (as it must be), there is no room left for doubt as to the meaning of the antitype.

Now, it is in the epistle to the Hebrews that the functions of Christ’s priesthood are most fully made known. There we are shown that both Aaron and Melchizedek were needed to foreshadow completely its various aspects. The design of God in appointing Aaron was to typify the person and work of Christ, as is clear from “as was Aaron...so also Christ” (Heb 5:4-5)—an unmistakable parallel. Hebrews 2:17 makes it quite plain that Christ acted as Priest here on earth, for He made “reconciliation for the sins of the people”—as Aaron was priest *before* he entered the holiest, so also was Christ. Hebrews 7:26 exhibits the qualifications and excellencies which fitted Christ to discharge this office, describing what He was here when brought into contact with sin and sinners. “Such a high priest became us”—was requisite for and suited to fallen creatures—none other could expiate our sins, procure acceptance with God, or purchase eternal redemption. Hebrews 8:3; 9:11-15, 25-28; 10:10-12 also prove that Christ discharged His priestly office *on earth*, offering Himself as a sacrifice to God. Conclusive proof of this was furnished by God’s rending of the veil, thereby setting aside the whole system of the Levitical order, His priestly oblation having superseded theirs.

As might well be expected from their relative positions in the Sacred Canon, Hebrews takes us farther than Romans (wonderful as that epistle is) in the revelation of God’s manifold wisdom and the unveiling of His amazing grace. In Romans, the scene is laid in the law court; in Hebrews, within the temple. In the former, the righteousness of God is displayed; in the latter, His holiness shines forth. In the one, justification is the outstanding

provision of the Gospel; in the other, sanctification is the product of Christ's sacrifice. In Romans, Christ is seen as the covenant Head and federal Representative of His people; in Hebrews, as their great High Priest. In the former, believers obtain a secure standing before God's throne; in the latter, they are privileged to draw nigh as worshippers before the mercy seat. As both Aaron and Melchizedek were needed to set forth the sacrificial and royal functions of Christ's priesthood, so both Phinehas and Joshua were required (Jos 14:1) to exhibit Him as the Bestower of our inheritance—the Lamb-Lion of Revelation 5:5-6. As Priest (and Lamb), Christ *purchased* the "eternal inheritance" (Heb 9:11-15), as the anti-typical Joshua (and Lion), His *power* conducts the heirs into it.

THE DOCTRINE OF HUMAN DEPRAVITY

11. Its Corollaries, Part 1

In the introductory article of this series, we intimated that we should endeavour to show that our present subject is one of immense doctrinal importance and of great practical value. In view of all that has been advanced in our subsequent discussions, that fact should be clearly apparent. The teaching of Scripture thereon supplies us with a divinely accurate diagnosis of man's present condition. It shows us, as nothing else can or does, why the entire course of human history has been what it is, and explains why all the remedial methods and measures of man's wit to effect any radical improvement in society are thorough failures. It accounts for the fact that man in the twentieth century is essentially the same as in the first, that the like moral features pertain to white and black, yellow and red races, that no change of environment or "living condition" can transform a sinner into a saint—the removing of thistles and nettles from stony ground and transplanting them into the most fertile soil and lovely surroundings will not cause them to bear fragrant flowers or edible fruit. Human nature is fundamentally the same whether men live in mansions or hovels. Man does what he does because of what he is.

The deep importance of this doctrine of man's total depravity also appears in the close bearing which it has upon other aspects of the truth, and the light which it tends to cast upon them. Reject what is revealed in Genesis 3, and the remainder of the Bible becomes entirely meaningless, but accept what is there recorded, and everything else becomes intelligible and is seen to be in its proper place. The whole scheme of redemption manifestly proceeds in view of the ruination of their race by our first parents—our defection in Adam and our recovery by Christ plainly stand or fall together. It is just because he is a sinner that man needs a Saviour, and being so great a sinner, none but a divine Saviour is sufficient for him. Since sin has corrupted the whole of his constitution, vitiating and debasing all his faculties, man is utterly incapable of doing anything to raise himself out of the horrible pit into which the fall has plunged him. Sooner will the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots (Jer 13:23) than those who are at enmity with God evolve any love to Him or do that which is pleasing in His sight. If then such a one is to be made fit to dwell for ever with the thrice Holy One, then obviously a miracle of grace must be wrought in him.

Equally real and great is the practical value of this doctrine. Nothing else is so well calculated to humble the proud heart of the creature and bring him into the dust before his Maker, crying "Behold, I am vile" (Job 40:4). Nothing else is so well calculated to demonstrate the utter futility of the sinner's attempting to appease God and obtain His approbation by any efforts of his own, or to gain an acceptance with Him by his own performances. As well might a murderer standing in the dock seek to win the judge's favour by means of his smiles and flatteries. Nothing is so well calculated to convince us that, since our hearts be rotten to the core, our very righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa

64:6). And nothing else will so deeply impress upon the heart of a believer his entire dependence upon the Lord as a feeling sense of what he is by nature. That God must work in him both to will and to do of His good pleasure if ever he is to perform His bidding, that nothing but daily supplies of grace can preserve him in the narrow and upward way. But let us now proceed to particularize what has just been summarized.

Since the entire being of the natural man be under the dominion of sin, it follows that *his will is in bondage thereto*. Anyone who denies that fact evinces that he does not understand or believe in the total depravity of man, for in effect he is asserting that one of the most important of his faculties has not been debased by the fall. But as the whole of man's body is corrupt, so his entire soul is inclined unto evil only, and so long as he remains in the state of nature, his will is in captivity thereto. The power of the will can only extend itself to things within its own province and cannot act above it—all actions and powers of action are limited by the nature and capacity of their agent. As creatures below man cannot put forth a rational act, neither can those who lack a holy principle (which all do till born again) put forth any spiritual action. Before divine grace works upon and within the heart, man's will is enslaved by sin, he is "in the bond of iniquity" (Act 8:23), the servant of those lusts and pleasures which he chooses and delights in. Christ must make us free (Joh 8:36) before there is or can be any deliverance from our moral captivity.

The Lord Jesus declared, "Whosoever committeth sin is the servant ["bondman"] of sin" (Joh 8:34)—sin is his master, ordering all his actions. Nevertheless, he voluntarily assents thereto, that is why it is termed "the will of *the flesh*" (Joh 1:13), for it is defiled. It is "without strength" (Rom 5:6) unto that which is good. Since the tree itself be corrupt, no good fruit will be borne by it. Romans 8:7 not only declares that the carnal mind is enmity against God and that it is not subject to the law of God, but adds, "neither indeed can be," which would not be the case were the will of fallen man free, or had power unto good. Even when the understanding is convinced and sees the truth, the will obstinately opposes and rejects it. Rightly did G. H. Bishop (of the Dutch Reformed Church) say, "Man can no more turn to God than the dead can sit up in their coffins. He can no more originate a right desire than he can create a universe. God the Holy Spirit alone, by sovereign, special interference, calls dead sinners to life and creates within them 'the desires of their hearts'—the first faint fluttering of a breath toward holiness."

Some may reply, "But my own experience refutes what you have said. I am clearly conscious of the fact that my will accepted the offer of the Gospel. That I freely came to Christ as a lost sinner and accepted Him as my own Saviour." Fully admitting that, if you go a little *farther back*, you will find that your very experience confirms what we have written above. Previous to conversion, your will was opposed to God, and you refused to come to Christ. Though the time arrived when that was reversed, *who* produced or caused that change—you or God? In every conscious act he performs, man necessarily wills. In repenting, he wills, in believing, he wills, in turning from his evil ways and in turning unto God in Christ, he wills. But does the sinner make himself willing, or does God? The question at issue is—Does salvation *begin* by self-movement or divine? Scripture is plain on the matter. God alters the bent or bias of the will, by communicating a principle of grace and holiness. A supreme will overcomes man's. He who said, "Let there be light: and there was light" (Gen 1:3) says, Let rebellion and opposition cease, and it does so. "So then it is

not of him that willeth [originally], nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy" (Rom 9:16). As He loved us before we loved Him (1Jo 4:19), so His will goes before ours in conversion.

Because the natural man is dead in trespasses and sins, *he is quite insensible of his wretched plight*. This is indeed one of the most terrible elements in the fatal malady which has smitten him; that he is so morally paralysed as to be quite unaware of his desperate state. At this juncture, it is necessary to point out that there is a difference between being totally ignorant of our condition and being quite insensible thereof. The unregenerate may acquire a theoretical knowledge of man's total depravity, yet they are still without any feeling sense of the same. They may hold the theological belief that sin is the transgression of the divine Law, but they have no inward horror and anguish over their vileness. That deadly insensibility is in all sinners, and at all times. Their natural emotions may be stirred as they listen to a portrayal of the sufferings of Christ on the cross—like they shed tears over some particularly touching incident recorded in the newspapers, or a pathetic episode acted on the stage—but they weep not over their awful enmity against God, nor mourn because of their contrariety to His holiness. They are quite incapable of so doing, for they have a *stony heart* (Eze 36:26) Godward, and realize not that His wrath abides upon them.

This it is which explains why sinners generally are so secure and happy. It has always appeared strange, as well as grievous, to the saints to see the ungodly so unconcerned and light-hearted, though under sentence of death. Job understood not how the wicked could "take the timbrel and harp, and rejoice at the sound of the organ," spending "their days in mirth, and in a moment go down to the grave" (Job 21:12-13, margin). The Psalmist was perplexed when he "saw the prosperity of the wicked" and observed that they were "not in [soul] trouble as other men" (Psa 73:3, 5). Amos was astonished at the sinners in Zion, who "put far away the evil day," and who lay upon beds of ivory...eat the lambs out of the flock...invent to themselves instruments of musick...drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments" (Amo 6:1-6), but were thoroughly unconcerned about their souls. Though natural men differ from one another in so many respects, in *this* they are very much alike. They generally live as though there be no God to whom they must yet render an account, and who will pass sentence of eternal damnation upon them. Such stupidity in rational and immortal creatures can be explained only on the ground of their insensibility. They have eyes, but see not; ears, but hear not; hearts, but perceive not. Thus, it is not at all strange that those who neither discern nor *feel* their danger should *fear* none.

Those who deny the moral insensibility of sinners are but proclaiming their own insensibility, for they repudiate not only what Scripture maintains, but that which universal observation confirms. Nothing but their crass stupidity can account for the conduct of the great majority of mankind, who are saying peace and safety while exposed to instant and eternal destruction. They are completely unconcerned that their hearts are desperately wicked, their understandings darkened, and their wills in bondage to evil. They are unaware of Satan's malignant dominion over them, and know not that he is perpetually causing them to sin. The devil employs a multitude of devices to ensnare them. He knows how to take full advantage of their sottishness, yet though they be led captive by him from day to day, they perceive not his wiles and influence. Even though they recognize the objects which he employs to seduce them, they realize not his seducing power. They are ignorant

that they are continually walking in the paths of the destroyer, who is leading them blindfold to hell. They know not, or if they do, they care not, that the friendship of the world is enmity with God, and that to follow a multitude to do evil is the direct road to endless woe. Hence it is that they are not sensible of stumbling at one another. They are united in their disaffection to God, and in their love of sin. They join hand in hand, all lead and are led. Their very numbers inspire them with courage and resolution, and encourage them to walk together in the path of ruin.

In view of all that has been advanced, it is crystal clear that *fallen man is in a lost and perishing condition*. He is obnoxious to God, alienated from His life (Eph 4:18), cast out of His favour (Gen 3:24), cut off from communion with Him (Eph 2:12). He is given up to the devil, to be led captive by him as he pleases. He is dead in trespasses and sins, and that means (among other things) that he is utterly powerless where spiritual things be concerned, quite unable to do anything in regard of them, yet he is powerful with respect to that which is carnal and devilish. Entirely averse to all that is good and holy, his will desperately set against the truth, but prone to and in love with his iniquities as to regard them as his benefactors (Hos 2:5, 12). His heart is so calloused that the mercies of God melt him not, nor do His threatenings and judgments awe him. Instead of the divine goodness leading him to repentance, it leads him to deeper impenitence, unbelief and presumption, for since he sees the sun shining and the rain falling on the evil and on the good, and God suffering all things to come alike to the one as to the other, he concludes that He will treat them all alike in the next world.

Man's plight is very much worse than is generally recognized, even in those sections of Christendom which are still regarded as being orthodox. Quite recently we read a piece entitled "Individual Salvation" wherein things were thus presented. "Imagine a situation in which an island is affected by some calamity, say a raging fire, and that the only escape is by means of a bridge to the mainland. The bridge is swiftly erected. Once erected it offers the possibility of escape, of salvation, for the entire island—but only a possibility. The concrete realization of the possibility is a matter for each individual man, woman, and child. The bridge does not offer automatic salvation, but simply the opportunity. If some individual citizen deems that the fire will die down, and that he proposes to remain in the conflagration, the possibility of escape by the bridge is nullified. It is true that he can be carried by force over the bridge to safety. But God does not effect the soul's salvation by compulsion. Unless the individual wills acceptance, he perishes." Then, after quoting John 3:16, the writer added, "The individual must himself decide to cross the bridge."

How far below the desperateness of the sinner's case and situation does such an illustration fall! It ignores the fact that sin has such a stupefying effect upon the whole soul of the natural man that he is oblivious to his peril and insensible of his dire need. It loses sight of the fact that the sinner is not only in gross darkness, but has no desire to be enlightened. That he is stricken with a deadly malady, and is quite unwilling to be healed. He is highly displeased if someone tells him of his awful danger, resenting anything which disturbs his false peace and comfort. Sinners could not bear to hear the plain preaching of either God's prophets or His incarnate Son. They stoned the former and crucified the latter. So it is now. They refuse to give a hearing unto one who declares them to be *totally* depraved. Even though mentally convinced of the urgency of his situation, the sinner has no eyes to see

“the bridge,” and if another offered to lead him, it would be of no avail, for he is “without strength” (Rom 5:6). True, God does not effect the soul’s salvation by compulsion, but He *does* by a miracle of grace—Making His people willing in the day of His power (Psa 110:3), imparting life, light, and strength to them.

Since man be totally depraved, *how great is his need of salvation!* The guilt of Adam’s transgression is charged to his account, the polluted nature of our first parents transmitted to him, he is shapen in iniquity, conceived in sin, and enters this world a child of wrath, estranged from God from his mother’s womb (Psa 58:3). Born with a heart that is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer 17:9), from earliest childhood, he pursues a course of self-will and self-pleasing, treasuring up to himself wrath against the day of wrath (Rom 2:5). His iniquities are more in number than the hairs of his head (Psa 40:12) and his “trespass” [or “guiltiness”] is grown up unto the heavens” (Ezr 9:6). He lies beneath the death sentence of the Law, and that curse cannot be removed until full satisfaction has been rendered to it, and such satisfaction the guilty culprit is utterly powerless to render. Nor can any of his fellows, no, not his nearest and dearest relatives, discharge his incalculable debt. “None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him, for the redemption of their soul is precious” (Psa 49:7-8), or “costly” as the same word is rendered in 1 Kings 7:9-10. And the sinner is a moral bankrupt, with no good thing to his credit, without a penny to discharge his liabilities.

Manifest it is that such a one is utterly unfit for heaven, and even if he were permitted to enter it, he would at once desire to depart therefrom, for he would be entirely out of his element, having nothing whatever in common with the ineffable holiness of its atmosphere and society. Not only so, he is already ripe for hell, fit only for the company of the damned. Thus, the natural man is in a perishing condition. Not only does he need delivering from the curse of the Law, the wrath of God, and the captivity of the devil, but he requires *saving from himself*—from the guilt, the dominion, and the pollution of his sins. He needs to be saved from his hard, impenitent, and unbelieving heart, from his love of the world, from his self-righteousness. Divine justice requires not only that he be clear of any accusation the Law can bring against him, but that he possess a perfect obedience which constitutes him righteous before the Law, and thus has a title to the reward of endless felicity. But his righteousnesses are as filthy rags (Isa 64:6), and the wearer of them a moral leper. His plight is desperate beyond the power of words to express. There is but a step betwixt him and death, and beyond that lies “the blackness of darkness for ever” (Jude 1:13).

It is equally evident that the lost sinner is *incapable of contributing anything toward his salvation*. Can a foul and filthy fountain send forth clean and pure waters? Neither can a polluted creature offer anything which is acceptable unto the Holy One. “The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the LORD” (Pro 15:8), as He made clear at the beginning, when He had not respect unto Cain and his offering. Instead of a pleasing service to God, it is an insulting provocation, for it lacks that principle without which it is impossible to please Him (Heb 11:6). The supplications of the unregenerate are rejected by Him. “And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear” (Isa 1:15). And why? Because such “praying” is the howling of those in pain (Hos 7:14) rather than the breathings of loving devotion; or the wishings and cravings of those who would have their lusts gratified (Jam 4:3) rather than their souls

ministered unto; or bold presumptions for things unwarranted by the divine promises—they would have mercy without holiness, sins forgiven without forsaking them; or but the perfunctory exercises of those who have a form of godliness but are strangers to its power (2Ti 3:5). Likewise are their fastings rejected (Isa 58:3-7; Zec 7:5).

“We can no more be voluntarily serviceable to God while our serpentine nature and devilish habits remain in us, than we can suppose that the devil can be willing to glorify God while the nature he contracted by his fall works powerfully in him. Our nature and will must be changed, that our actions may regard God as our end, that we may delightfully meditate on Him, and draw the motives of our obedience from love” (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680). The imperative necessity of that radical change in the soul, a change so great and complete as to be like unto a second birth, was expressed by Christ when He declared, “Ye must be born again” (Joh 3:3) having prefaced the same by stating, “Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God....Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Joh 3:3, 5, 7). There must be a spiritual and supernatural principle in us before we can live a spiritual and supernatural life. The new birth is indispensable, yet what can one who is dead in sin do to effect it? As Nicodemus asked, “How can a man be born when he is old?” (John 3:4). “Ye must be born again” at once reveals the utter futility of all self-effort. Such a demand withers all fleshly pretensions and bars the gates of heaven against all the unregenerate. It is designed to crush pride and make man realize his helplessness.

As the sinner cannot regenerate himself, neither can he produce any evangelical repentance, for “godly sorrow worketh repentance” (2Co 7:10), and of godliness, he has not a spark. Until he be born again, he can neither hate sin nor abhor himself. Nor is he capable of exercising faith—how can he confide in One to whom he is a total stranger, trust in One whom he regards as his enemy, love One with whom he is at enmity? The obstacles in the way to salvation are absolutely insurmountable by any efforts of the sinner. He might as easily turn back the tide as deliver his soul. That solemn fact was shown by Christ when, in answer to His disciples’ question, “Who then can be saved,” He averred, “with men this is *impossible*” (Mat 19:26). What a shattering word was that to all creature sufficiency! How it should bring the sinner to despair of saving himself!

INTERPRETATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 20

In our last, we pointed out that different aspects of truth are frequently emphasized in the Scriptures by placing two incidents in juxtaposition in order to give point to various differences between them. We gave several illustrations from the Old Testament of *the law of comparison and contrast*. Let us now show that the same principle holds good in the New Testament. Consider, first, the striking antitheses between what is recorded in Luke 18:35-42 and 19:1-9. That which is narrated in the former occurred as Christ approached

Jericho (the city of the curse—Jos 6:26), whereas the latter took place after He had passed through it. The subject of the first was a blind beggar; that of the second was “chief of the publicans.” Bartimaeus occupied a lowly place, for he “sat by the way side”; Zacchaeus assumed an elevated position, for he “climbed up into a sycamore tree.” The one was intent on seeking alms from the passers-by; the other was determined to “see Him”—Christ. Bartimaeus took the initiative and cried, “Son of David, have mercy on me”; Christ took the initiative with Zacchaeus, bidding him, “Come down.” The former supplicated for his sight; of the latter, Christ made a peremptory request, “To day I must abide at thy house.” The multitude rebuked Bartimaeus for crying to Christ; all “murmured” at Christ for going to be the guest of Zacchaeus.

There is a striking series of contrasts between what is found in the opening verses of John 3 and John 4. What is recorded in the former, occurred in Jerusalem; in the latter, the scene is laid in Samaria. In the one, we have “a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus”; in the other, an unnamed woman. He was a person of distinction, a “master of Israel”; she was of the lower classes, for she came to the well “to draw water.” He was a favoured Jew; she was a despised Samaritan—a semi-heathen. Nicodemus was a man of high reputation, a member of the Sanhedrin; the one with whom Christ dealt in John 4 was a woman of dissolute habits. Nicodemus came unto Jesus; Christ waited for the woman at the well, and she had no thought of meeting her Saviour. The former incident took place “by night”; the latter, at midday. To the self-righteous Pharisee, Christ said, “Ye must be born again”; to the sinner of the Gentiles, He told of “the gift of God.” Nothing is said of how the former interview ended—apparently Nicodemus was, at that time, unconvinced; the latter went forth and bore testimony unto Christ.

By comparing together what is recorded in the earliest parts of John 12 and 13, some interesting and instructive contrasts are revealed. In the former, we read that “they made him a supper”; in the latter, there is a supper which He appointed. There, He is seated at the table; here, He arose from it. There, He is honoured; here, He performs the office of a menial. In the one, we behold Mary at the feet of the Saviour; in the other, we see the Son of God stooping to attend to the feet of His disciples. The feet speak of *the walk*. Christ’s feet were anointed with costly ointment; those of the apostles were washed with water. As Christ passed through this world, He contracted no pollution. He left it as He entered—“holy, harmless, undefiled” (Heb 7:26). That His feet were anointed with the fragrant spikenard tells us of the sweet savour which ever ascended from Him to the Father, perfectly glorifying Him in every step of His path. In sharp contrast with His, the walk of the disciples was defiled, and the grime of the way needed to be removed if they were to have “part” or communion with Him (Joh 13:8). His feet were anointed *before* theirs were washed, for in all things He must have the “pre-eminence” (Col 1:18). In connection with the former, Judas complained; in the latter, Peter demurred. Interpretatively, the one had Christ’s burial in view (Joh 12:7); the other adumbrated an important part of His present ministry on high (Joh 13:1).

Many illustrations of this principle are found in connection with words and expressions that are used *only twice* in the Scriptures, and startling are the contrasts between them. *Apognigo* occurs only in Luke 8:7, 33. The one having reference to the seed being choked by thorns; the other where the demon-possessed swine were choked in the sea. In Luke

2:1-5, *apographe* is employed in connection with the Firstborn Himself being enrolled on earth, whereas in Hebrews 12:23, it refers to the Church of the Firstborn enrolled in heaven. *Apokueo* is used in James 1:15, 18, of lust bringing forth sin, and of the Father begetting us with the Word of truth. *Apolausis* is applied to the things which God has given us to enjoy lawfully (1Ti 6:17), and to the refusal of Moses to enjoy the unlawful pleasures of sin (Heb 11:25). *Anthrakia* is found only in John 18:18, where Peter joined Christ's enemies before "a fire of coals," and in 21:9, where the disciples fed before one in the presence of Christ. *Choramakros* is the "far country" into which the prodigal took his journey (Luk 15:13), and a very different one to which Christ went at His ascension (Luk 19:12). *Panoplia* is used of the enemy's "armour" (Luk 11:22), and of the armour Christ has provided for the saints (Eph 6:11, 13).

There are two references unto "the king's dale". In the one, Melchizedek brought forth that which symbolized Christ (Gen 14:17-18); in the other, Absalom erected a monument unto himself (2Sa 18:18). What a marked (and probably designed) contrast there is between the expressions, "There *fell* of the people that day about three thousand men" (Exo 32:28), and, "The same day there were *added* unto them about three thousand souls" (Act 2:41)—the only occasions where "about three thousand" is used in Scripture. Similar too is this example, "There were with him [David] about four hundred men" (1Sa 22:2), and there "rose up Theudas, boasting himself to be somebody; to whom a number of men, about four hundred, joined themselves" (Act 5:36). In 1 Samuel 28:24, we read of the "fat calf" of the witch of Endor. In Luke 15:23, we are told of "the fatted calf" which was killed for the prodigal son! *Katischuo* occurs only in "the gates of hell shall not prevail against it"—the Church (Mat 16:18), and "the voice of them and of the chief priests prevailed" (Luk 23:23) with Pilate against Christ, to consent unto His crucifixion.

How much we miss through failing to heed carefully that word, "comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1Co 2:13). If we spent more time in prayerfully meditating upon the Scriptures, we should oftener have occasion to say with David, "I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil" (Psa 119:162). It is not to the hurried nor to the cursory reader that its treasures are revealed. What a startling and solemn contrast is there between Christ was "numbered with the transgressors" (Mar 15:28), and Judas was "numbered with" the apostles (Act 1:17). *Kataluma* is used only in Luke 2:7, where it is rendered "There was no room for them in the *inn*"; and in Luke 22:11, where it is translated "guestchamber"—where the Saviour partook of the passover with His disciples. The woman of Thyatira in Acts 16:14 had her heart opened by the Lord so that she might "take unto her" (which is the meaning of the Greek word rendered "attend") the message of God's servant; but the woman of Thyatira in Revelation 2:20 opened her mouth for the purpose of seducing God's servants! Only twice do we read of the Lord Jesus being *kissed*, and what a contrast—the woman's kiss of devotion (Luk 7:38), Judas' kiss of betrayal (Mat 26:49)!

In connection with the interpreting of Scripture, *the value* of this principle of comparing two things or passages and of observing their variations may be still more definitely seen by placing side by side our Lord's parable of the wedding feast of Matthew 22:1-10 and the parable of the great supper of Luke 14:16-24. The commentators have carelessly assumed that they teach the same thing, but a close examination of them will show that, though they have a number of things in common, they present quite different aspects of

truth—illustrating, respectively, the external, general, and powerless call of the Gospel and the internal, particular, and effectual call of God. In the former, it is “servants” (in the plural number) who are engaged, verses 3, 4, 6, 8, 10. Whereas in the latter, it is “that servant” (verse 21), “his servant” (verse 21), “the servant” (verses 22-23). It is to be noted that their commissions are not the same. The servants are instructed to “Call them that were bidden to the wedding” (verse 3), to “tell them” (verse 4), and to “bid to the marriage” (verse 9), and nothing more. Whereas the servant was not only to “Say to them that were bidden, Come” (verse 17), but also to “bring in” (verse 21), and to “compel them to come in” (verse 23).

When those distinctions are duly weighed, it should be quite evident that, whereas in Matthew 22 the “servants” are the ministers of God sent forth to preach the Gospel to every creature, “the servant” of Luke 14 is none other than the Holy Spirit, who by His invincible power and effectual operations quickens God’s elect into newness of life. He alone is able to overcome their natural disrelish for and opposition to divine things, as He alone is competent to “bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind.” Nor could anyone less truly say of his efforts, “Lord, it is done *as thou hast commanded*” (Luk 14:22). As Christ was the “servant” of the Godhead (Mat 12:18-20) during the days of His flesh, so the blessed Spirit is the “servant” of Christ during this era (Joh 16:14; Act 2:33). This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that the servants were “entreated spitefully” and even “slain” (Mat 22:6). Moreover, we read of them, “So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all [into the local churches] as many as they found, both *bad* and good” (Mat 22:10), for they were unable to read hearts; but no such statement is made of the Servant, who “brings” (to heaven) those whom He deals with.

Ere leaving this division of our subject, one other example of its importance and value. By making use of the law of contrast, we are able decisively to determine the controversy which Socinians have raised upon that momentous verse, “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we [which were destitute of acceptable obedience] might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2Co 5:21). That is one of the profoundest and most comprehensive statements to be found in the Scriptures concerning the atonement, containing as it does a brief epitome of the whole plan of salvation. Enemies of the Gospel insist that the “made sin” ought to be translated “made a sin-offering,” but such is entirely inadmissible, for in that case the antithesis would require us to render “that we might be made a righteous-offering of God in him”—a manifest absurdity. The contrast which is here drawn fixes the exact meaning of the terms used. Believers are legally constituted righteous in Christ before God, and therefore the contrast *demand*s that Christ was legally constituted sin—guilty in the eyes of God’s Law. The grand truth affirmed in this verse is the exchange of places with the counter imputations thereof. Our sins were reckoned to the account of our Surety, rendering Him judicially guilty; His obedience is reckoned to our account, rendering us judicially righteous before God.

28. *The law of first mention.* Very frequently this is of great help in arriving at the meaning of a word or expression. Since there be but one Speaker throughout the entire Word, and He knew from the beginning all that He was going to say, He has so ordered His utterances as to forecast from the outset whatever was to follow. Thus, by noting its setting and associations, the initial occurrence of anything in the Scriptures usually inti-

mates to us how it will subsequently be employed. In other words, the earliest pronouncement of the Holy Spirit on a subject very frequently indicates, substantially, what is found in the later references thereto. This is of real assistance to the expositor, supplying him with a kind of key to what follows. So far as we are aware, attention was originally directed to this canon of exegesis by Lord Bacon (1600), and for more than forty years, this writer has made use of the same, putting it to the test in scores of instances. And while he has found a few cases where the first mention of a term failed to intimate clearly its future scope, he has never met with one that was out of harmony therewith, and the vast majority of them were valuable in serving to define their significance and scope. This will appear from the illustrations which follow.

The *first prophecy* recorded in Scripture supplies the key to the whole subject of Messianic prediction, furnishing a remarkable outline and forecast of all that was to follow. Said the Lord God to the serpent, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen 3:15). First, it is to be noted that those words were not addressed to Adam and Eve, implying that man was not the immediate party in the covenant of recovery, that it depended not upon anything of, by, or from *him*. Second, that this divine pronouncement was made after the fall, and from this point onwards, prophecy is always consequent upon human failure, coming in not during the normal state of affairs, but only when ruin has begun and judgment is impending—the next prophecy was through Enoch (Jude 1:14-15) just before the flood! In the prophecy of Genesis 3:15, it was revealed that all human hope was to centre in a Coming One. It made known that the Coming One should be man, the woman's "seed," and therefore of supernatural birth. It announced that He would be the object of Satan's enmity. It foretold that He should be temporarily humiliated—bruised in His heel. It also proclaimed His ultimate victory, for He should bruise the serpent's head, and therefore must be more than man. It intimated the age-long strife there would be between the two seeds—the children of the devil and those united unto Christ.

And the Lord said unto Cain, "What hast thou done? The voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground" (Gen 4:10). That is the first time that all-important word "blood" is mentioned in the Scriptures, and like all the initial occurrences of fundamental terms, it well repays the most careful attention and meditation. Profoundly important is this reference, foreshadowing as it does some of the most essential and outstanding features of the atonement of Christ. Abel was a shepherd (Gen 4:2) and was hated, though without cause, by his brother (1Jo 3:12). He did not die a natural death, but met with a violent end, as the good Shepherd was crucified and slain by wicked hands (Act 2:23). In the light of those facts, how deeply significant are the words "the voice of thy brother's blood *crieth unto me*." That is the all-important but inexpressibly blessed thing in connection with the blood of Christ—it is *vocal Godwards*! It is "the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel" (Heb 12:24), for it satisfied every demand of God and procured inestimable blessing for His people. The next mention of "blood" is in Genesis 9:4, where we learn that *life* is in the blood. The third reference is Exodus 12:13, where it delivers from the avenging angel. Put the three together and we have a complete outline of all the subsequent teaching of Scripture upon the blood. They treat, respectively, of death, life, salvation.

