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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

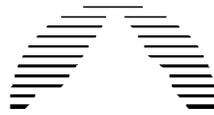
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Studies in the Scriptures appeared without interruption from 1922 to 1953, each issue including six to eight articles addressing a different topic in a series. While virtually unknown to the Christian world when he died, his writings continue to grow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

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GOD'S LOVINGKINDNESS

In the closing paragraphs of our March cover-page article, reference was made to the *faithfulness* of God; here we propose to engage the reader with another of His excellencies—one of which every Christian has received innumerable proofs. We turn unto a consideration of God's lovingkindness, because it is our desire and aim to maintain a due proportion in treating of the divine perfections, for all of us are very apt to entertain one-sided ideas and views of the same. There is a balance to be preserved here (as everywhere), as appears in those two summarized statements of the divine attributes, "God is light" (1Jo 1:5), "God is love" (1Jo 4:8). The sterner and more awe-inspiring aspects of the divine character are offset by the gentler and more winsome ones. It is to our irreparable loss if our minds dwell almost exclusively on God's sovereignty and majesty, or His holiness and justice; we need to meditate frequently (though not exclusively!) upon His goodness and mercy. Nothing short of a full-orbed view of the divine perfections—as they are revealed in Holy Writ—should content us.

Scripture speaks of "the *multitude* of his loving kindnesses" (Isa 63:7), and who is capable of numbering them? Said the Psalmist, "How *excellent* is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (Psa 36:7): no pen of man, no tongue of angel, can adequately express it. We read of God's "*marvellous* lovingkindness" (Psa 17:7), and surely it verily is. Familiar as may be this blessed attribute of God's unto people, yet is it something entirely peculiar unto divine revelation. None of the ancients ever dreamed of investing his gods with any such endearing perfection as this. None of the objects worshipped by present-day heathens is conceived of as possessed of gentleness and tenderness: very much the reverse, as the hideous features of their idols exhibit. Philosophers regard it as a serious reflection upon the honour of the Absolute to ascribe such qualities unto it. But the Scriptures have much to say upon God's lovingkindness, or His paternal favour unto His people, and His tender affection towards them.

The first time this divine perfection is mentioned in the Word is in that wondrous and glorious manifestation of Deity which was vouchsafed unto Moses, when Jehovah proclaimed His "Name"—i.e. Himself as made known. "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in *goodness* and truth" (Exo 34:6); though much more frequently the Hebrew word, *chesed*, is rendered "kindness" and "lovingkindness." In our English Bibles, the initial reference, as connected with God, is Psalm 17:7, where David prayed, "Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee." "Marvellous" it truly is that One so infinitely above us, so inconceivably glorious, so ineffably holy, should not only deign to notice such worms of the earth, but set His heart upon them, give His Son for them, send His Spirit to indwell them, and so bear with all their imperfections and waywardness as never to remove His lovingkindness from them.

Consider some of the evidences and exercises of this divine attribute unto the saints. "In love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself" (Eph 1:4-5); and, as the previous verse shows, that love was engaged on their behalf before this world came into existence. "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him" (1Jo 4:9), which was His amazing provision for us as fallen creatures. "I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3)—i.e. unto Myself, by the quickening operations of My Spirit, by the invincible power of My grace, by creating in you a deep sense of need, by attracting you by My winsomeness. "I will betroth thee unto me for ever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies" (Hos 2:19). Having made us willing in the day of His power to give up ourselves unto Him, the Lord enters into an everlasting marriage contract with us.

This lovingkindness of the Lord is never removed from His children. To our reason and sense, it may *appear* to be so, yet it never is; for since the believer be in Christ, nothing can separate him from the love of God (Rom 8:39). God has solemnly engaged Himself by covenant, and our sins cannot make it void. God has sworn that if His children keep not His commandments, He will "visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes"; yet He at once adds, "Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from *him*, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail: My covenant will I not break" (Psa 89:30-35). Observe well the change of number from "their" and "them" to "him": the lovingkindness of God toward His people is centered in Christ. It is because His exercise of lovingkindness is a covenant engagement that it is repeatedly linked to His "truth" (Psa 40:11; 138:2), showing that it proceeds to us by promise, and therefore, we should never despair.

“For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed; but my kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee” (Isa 54:10). No, that covenant has been ratified by the blood of its Mediator, by which blood the enmity (occasioned by sin) has been removed and perfect reconciliation effected. God knows the thoughts which He entertains unto those embraced in His covenant and who have been reconciled to Him, namely, “thoughts of peace, and not of evil” (Jer 29:11). Therefore are we assured, “The LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me” (Psa 42:8). What a word is that! Not merely that the Lord will give or bestow, but *command* His lovingkindness: it is given by decree, bestowed by royal engagement, as He also commands “deliverances” (Psa 44:4), “strength” (Psa 68:28), “the blessing, even life for evermore” (Psa 133:3), which announces that nothing can possibly hinder these bestowments. Well then, may we exclaim, “Thy lovingkindness is better than life” (Psa 63:3)!

And what ought to be our response thereto? First, “Be ye therefore followers [“imitators”] of God, as dear children; And walk in love” (Eph 5:1-2). “Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness” (Col 3:12). Thus it was with David: “Thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth” (Psa 26:3). His mind was employed thereon, he delighted to ponder it, and it refreshed his soul to do so; yea, it moulded his conduct. The more we are occupied with God’s goodness, the more careful shall we be about our obedience—the constraints of God’s love and grace are more powerful to the regenerate than the terrors of His Law! “How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God! therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings” (Psa 36:7). Thus, second, a sense of this divine perfection strengthens faith and promotes confidence in God.

Third, it should stimulate the spirit of worship: “Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee” (Psa 63:3; Psa 117). Fourth, it should be our cordial when depressed: “Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness [same Hebrew word] be for my comfort” (Psa 119:76). It was so with Christ in His anguish (Psa 69:17). Fifth, it should be made our plea in prayer: “Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 119:159). David applied to that divine attribute for new strength and increased vigour. Sixth, it should be appealed to when we have fallen by the wayside: “Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness” (Psa 51:1): deal with me according to the gentlest of Thy attributes, make my case an exemplification of Thy tenderness. Seventh, it should be a petition in our evening devotions: “Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning” (Psa 143:8): arouse me with my soul in tune therewith, let my waking thoughts be of Thy goodness.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

52. 2 Thessalonians 2:16-17, Part 2

“And God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace” (2Th 2:16). Divine love is the fountain; everlasting consolation and good hope are the streams which flow from it. God’s love for His people preceded their fall into sin—both historically and as foreseen by Him—for it was a love of complacency, and not of compassion or pity, which He bore them. As the first Adam was “the figure of him that was to come” (Rom 5:14), so Eve was the original type of the Church as the Bride of Christ (Gen 2:24; Eph 5:31-32). Eve was created and given to Adam by God *before* he transgressed, and she was as pure and upright as he was, fully suited to be his wife and companion. A holy Adam and a holy Eve were united in wedlock prior to the entrance of evil into this world. That was a blessed adumbration of the fact that God appointed a sinless and holy Church to be the Wife and Companion of His Son; and accordingly, she was given a marriage union with Him in the eternal purpose of God antecedent to His foreview of Adam’s defection and the Church’s fall in him—her federal head—for he was equally the head of all mankind. That Eve kept not her first estate in no wise affected the fact that she was Adam’s sinless wife previously.

In Eden, God caused to be typed out in a most wonderful way His secret and everlasting counsels respecting His own elect. His love unto them was like Himself: incomprehensible, infinite, immutable. Nothing could change or cloud it. So far from sin quenching His love, it only provided occasion for Him to manifest its strength and durability, and to go forth in mercy and compassion. As Adam did not cast off his wife when she yielded to the Serpent’s wiles, neither did God revoke His benign purpose when the Church became dead in trespasses and sins through the Fall. Nay, it seems clear from the Word that “Adam was *not* deceived” (1Ti 2:14), that out of love to Eve, he voluntarily and deliberately joined her in her fallen condition—thereby foreshadowing the abounding love of Christ for His Church in being willing not only to assume our nature, and in all things “to be made like unto his brethren” (Heb 2:17), but also to be “made...sin for us” (2Co 5:21) and “bear [our] iniquities” (Isa 53:11); and in consequence, be “made a curse for us” (Gal 3:13).

“And hath given us everlasting consolation.” There is some difference of opinion among the commentators whether that “consolation” is to be regarded as exclusively an objective one, or whether it also includes our subjective experience of the same. Personally, we consider it is wholly objective, or outside of ourselves, though in proportion as faith is acted upon it, shall we enjoy the blessedness of the same. We base that view, first, upon the tense of the verb, “*hath given*”—not is now “giving” us, as it would read if our present experience were being described. Second, because of the qualifying word, “*everlasting*,” which signifies that the “consolation” here spoken of is a durable, immutable, and eternal one; whereas nothing is more fluctuating and fleeting than the inward consolation which most of the saints enjoy in this life, for their frames and feelings appear to be almost as variable as the weather—now on the mountain top, then in the valley, if not in the slough of despond. And third, unless we regard this “*everlasting consolation*” as an objective one—that is, as having reference to the matter or substance of our peace and joy—we confound it with the “*comfort your hearts*” in the next verse, where the apostle makes request that they might have the experimental effect and personal sense of the same *within* them.

“And hath given us everlasting consolation.” Unto what was the apostle referring? The answer to that question may be stated in two different forms. Thomas Manton (1620-1677) gives it, “in the new covenant”; and that provides a satisfactory meaning, for under the “old covenant” with the nation of Israel, the promises and blessings set forth therein were earthly and temporal ones. But the new covenant contains “a better hope” and “better promises” (Heb 7:19; 8:6), as the whole of that epistle is designed to set forth. But personally, we prefer to say that it is in *the Gospel* that God has given us “*everlasting consolation*,” for though the Gospel enunciates the new covenant, it is also and primarily a transcript of the everlasting covenant which God made with Christ, viewed as the Head of His people; and it is “the everlasting covenant” which is the foundation of all the believer’s consolations and hopes. In the Gospel is revealed the contents of that everlasting covenant, as Romans 16:25-26 affirms. Take away the Gospel, and the very foundation of our consolation and hope is removed. That is made clear in 1 Corinthians 15, where, after stating that the salient facts of the Gospel are that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried,

and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, Paul pointed out to those who denied His resurrection, "If Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain" (1Co 15:14).

Paul then went on to declare, "If in *this* life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable" (1Co 15:19), which was the reverse way of showing that in the Gospel, God has given us "everlasting consolation"—ratified by Christ's resurrection. Those words of 1 Corinthians 15:19 make it clear that we have no ground for hope beyond this life, except in the divine revelation made in the Gospel. Nay, we may go farther and affirm that even for this present life, there is no hope for any sinner apart from the revelation of Christ in the Gospel of God's grace. It cannot be too plainly and emphatically insisted upon today that if the Gospel be jettisoned, there is no well-grounded hope for any man—either for this life, or the life to come. The Christless—be they living moral or immoral lives—are described by the infallible pen of Inspiration as "having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). And such "hope" as they *do* cherish is but an imaginary, a blind, an impudent and presumptuous one; and in the moment of death, it will be found to be an empty deceit. "The hypocrite's hope shall perish" (Job 8:13). Make sure, my reader, that *your* hope is grounded upon the Gospel.

"Which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation." The word "consolation" means "the alleviation of misery, solace"; and it is in the Gospel (and nowhere else) that we learn of the wondrous and gracious provision which God has made for His people considered as lost sinners. As intimated above, the "which hath loved us" goes back to the source of all, when the triune God set His heart upon the Church and blessed it "with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). Then came the divine foreview of the Church's defection in the Adam Fall, which opened the way for a further manifestation of God's superabounding grace. That was evidenced in the everlasting covenant, in which arrangements were made for the Son to save His people from their sins, and for the Spirit to quicken them into newness of life. The Gospel contains a transcript of that everlasting covenant, proclaiming the distinctive goodness and gracious acts of each of the persons of the Godhead, which Gospel is fully expounded in the epistle to the Romans, as its opening verse indicates, and compare chapters 1:9, 16, 17; 16:25-27! In the Gospel, God hath given us everlasting consolation, revealing therein the remedy for sin, His provision for our holiness and happiness, the endless bliss He hath "prepared for them that love him" (1Co 2:9).

The "everlasting consolation" is in marked contrast with the evanescent pleasure afforded by the creature, which perishes with the using: and from the temporal portion allotted Israel as a nation. That which God has provided for His beloved Church is an *endless* one: it dies not with the body, but is as enduring as the soul: proceeding from God Himself, issuing from His free grace, grounded upon His sure Word. If it be asked, of what does this "everlasting consolation" *consist*? We answer, in a complete and effectual alleviation of the misery which our fall in Adam produced, and from all the dire consequences of the same. By Adam's disobedience, the Church became judicially alienated from God and experimentally separated from Him. By the entrance of sin the favour, the life, the image of God in the soul, was lost, and fellowship with Him totally severed. All of which was graphically represented by the driving out of man and God's placing "at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life" (Gen 3:24). But the Gospel makes known how the work of the last Adam reverses all that, resulting in the reconciliation of the Church unto God, restoring it to His unclouded favour, renewing her after His image, and bringing her into communion with Him.

"And hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace." Those gifts—though quite distinct—are really two parts of one whole: the former referring to the believer's present portion; the latter, unto his future. Both of them are the fruitage of that "everlasting righteousness" which Christ brought in for His people (Dan 9:24), having wrought out the same for them as their Representative, by not only suffering in their stead the full penalty of the broken Law, but also by rendering a perfect obedience unto its precept on their behalf. Thereby Christ not only makes complete atonement for all their transgressions, so that the guilt and pollution of the same are for ever removed from the sight of the Judge of all, but thereby obtaining for them an indefeasible title to the *reward* of the Law, so that they are justified or pronounced righteous before Him with full acceptance. The reward of the Law is "life" (Rom 7:10)—as its penalty is death—eternal life, and accordingly we read of "eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* before the world began" (Ti 1:2); and therefore, before any part of the Scriptures was written; and consequently, the reference must be unto the promise made to our federal Head in the everlasting covenant. The believer enjoys now both an earnest and a foretaste of that "eternal life."

“And hath given us...good hope.” This too refers not to any inward comfort, but to that which is the sure *ground* of comfort. In this verse, Paul contemplates not the grace of hope in the believer’s soul, but rather the object upon which that grace is to be exercised. The “good hope” equally with the “everlasting consolation” is here entirely objective, namely, that which is set before us in the Gospel. Thus, “For the hope which is laid up for you in heaven, whereof ye heard before in the word of the truth of the gospel” (Col 1:5), where “hope” is put for the object of it, namely, the glorious and blessed estate which is reserved for us hereafter. In Scripture, “hope” always contemplates something *future*, of which we are not yet in actual possession: “Hope that is seen [experienced or possessed] is not *hope*: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it” (Rom 8:24-25), though there it is the *grace* of “hope” which is in exercise. “That...we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope *set before* us” (Heb 6:18). There again “hope” is put for its object, and as faith “lays hold” of the same, “strong consolation” is produced in the soul.

In attempting to define the substance and character of our “good hope through grace,” we cannot do better than follow the outline supplied by T. Manton. First, it consists of the personal return of our Redeemer: “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Ti 2:13). “Hope” is there described by its grand Object, when He shall be seen no more “through a glass, darkly” but “face to face” (1Co 13:12); when all the holy longings and aspirations of His redeemed will be fully realized. Then will Christ see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied, possessed of what He purchased, and conducting the Church into the eternal abode which He has prepared for her. In proportion as our faith is exercised on that promise, and as our love burns and yearns for the Lover of our souls, shall we be “looking for,” eagerly awaiting, His appearing. Second, the resurrection of the dead: “And have hope toward God...that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust” (Act 24:15, and compare 26:6-8). It is at the return of Christ the living saints will be changed, and the sleeping ones raised in power and glory, and “fashioned like unto his glorious body” (Phi 3:21; 1Co 15; 1Th 4:16-17).

Third, the vision of God in Christ, when we shall at length be admitted into His presence, see Him as He is, and be made like Him both for holiness and happiness (1Jo 3:2). Fourth, our heavenly inheritance: an inheritance which is “incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for [us]” (1Pe 1:4). That will consist of “fullness of joy” in God’s presence, “pleasures for evermore” at His right hand (Psa 16:11). Think you not, Christian reader, that all of that is a “good hope”!—and it is wholly “through grace,” and in no wise earned by human merits. Have we not good cause, sure ground, to “rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2)! But it is only as faith is in exercise upon what God has revealed in the Gospel concerning the same that we *do rejoice*. It was unto this supreme good, namely, the eternal vision and fruition of God, that the eye of David was fixed when he said, “As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness” (Psa 17:15). Then let us be more in prayer that the grace of hope within us may be more engaged with these glorious objects of hope without us. This brings us to:

The special requests made by the apostle in this prayer: “Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work” (2Th 2:17). In that first petition, Paul was asking that an effectual *application* might be made unto the souls of those persecuted saints of the everlasting consolation and good hope which was given them in the Gospel. “Comfort your hearts”: Note the present tense, in contrast with the “hath given us” in the preceding verse. Clear proof is this that what was there before us is entirely objective, for if the “consolation” and “good hope” respected their experience, there was no need to ask for their hearts to be comforted. That which was here supplicated was that they might have an inward enjoyment of the same: that the glorious contents of the Gospel should be brought home in power to their hearts: that the substance of their consolation and the object of their hope would be made so real and solid as to fill them with peace and joy. Paul desired that they might have such a satisfying and blissful realization of the divine love and its manifestations unto them, that no tribulations and sufferings should be able to rob them, or even becloud the same in their apprehensions.

Here, as always, more was implied than was actually expressed. In order for such “comfort” to be experienced, *their graces* must be in exercise. The revelation which God has made to us in the Gospel profits us nothing until it be personally appropriated by faith. The wonderful vista of the future which is there unveiled to the saints animates them not unless the grace of hope be engaged with the same. Gospel faith and Gospel hope are twin graces in the soul, which, though distinguishable, cannot be severed any more than can light and heat in the sun. Faith exists not without hope, and hope has no being apart from faith. Such as

Christian's faith is, so is his hope. They are alike founded on and rooted in God's Word. Faith receives Christ as He is there set forth; hope confidently expects all the blessings therein promised. Christ is equally the Object of our faith and of our hope; yea, He *is* "our hope" (1Ti 1:1): its substance and its cause. Both work "by love" (Gal 5:6), which is the fulfilling of the Law. Faith is more than intellectual, hope is more than emotional; both are spiritual and dynamical, conforming the soul to the character of their objects.

But while it be the believer's responsibility to keep his graces in constant exercise, yet it lies not absolutely in his own power to do so; and therefore, did the apostle conjointly supplicate the Lord Jesus Christ and God their Father to "comfort [the] hearts" of the Thessalonians. It is a great mercy for the distressed to be truly comforted, yet it lies not in the power of any creature to administer the same. That is the prerogative of the Almighty: "I, even I, am he that comforteth you" (Isa 51:12); and therefore is He designated "the God of all comfort" (2Co 1:3). "God, that comforteth those that are cast down" (2Co 7:6). He may in His sovereign condescension use instruments in so doing, but the power and blessing are entirely His. In His gracious ministry unto the Church, the Spirit is denominated "the Comforter" (Joh 16:7), for He is the immediate Author of all our experimental consolations, as He is the Quickener, maintainer and fructifier of our graces. Therefore do we read that "For we *through the Spirit* wait for the hope of righteousness by faith" (Gal 5:5). He alone can make us cheerful amid sufferings, patient during the period of waiting the fulfilment of the promise, persevering in duty when there is so much to discourage.

"Comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work." The two petitions are closely related, as more clearly appears when the meaning of our English word "comfort" is understood: *comfortis*, "with strength." The Greek word here rendered "comfort" is literally "to call alongside—help." It is not a soporific or pain-deadener, as "comfort" imports in ordinary usage, but a renewing of moral energy, a spiritual vivication in view of trials yet to be faced. Such "comfort" God alone is capable of imparting. "Comfort is a strengthening of the mind when it is in danger of being weakened by fears and sorrows, or the strength and stay of the heart in trouble: 'This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me' (Psa 119:50). 'Thou hast put gladness in my heart' (Psa 4:7). God's comfort is like a soaking shower, that goes to the root and refresheth the plants of the earth, more than a morning dew, that wets only the surface. Other comforts tickle the senses and refresh the outward man, but this penetrateth to the heart"—T. Manton.

"And stablish you in every good word and work," which is only possible as God first "comforts" or strengthens us with might in the inner man. As none but God can comfort or strengthen, so He alone can "stablish" and enable us to persevere. There is a powerful tendency in us to stray (Psa 119:176). Good for us when we feel the need of crying, "Prone to wander? Lord, I feel it; prone to leave the God I love; Here's my heart; O take and seal it; seal it for Thy courts above." Nevertheless, we must ever bear in mind that these petitions imply *our obligations*. Though we cannot comfort ourselves, yet it is our responsibility to avoid the things which hinder: carnal fears, worldly delights, sins against conscience which destroy our peace, grieving the Spirit. So too we must seek to be instruments in God's hands of comforting others: by speaking words to those who are weary, lifting up the hands which hang down. Likewise, it is our duty to use those means which promote our establishment in the Faith, and beware of everything that tends to make us waver and temporize. To falter in the path of duty soon chills our joy.

"By 'every good work' is meant sound doctrine; by 'every good work,' holiness of life. Establishment in faith and holiness is a needful blessing, and earnestly to be sought of God"—T. Manton. It is a prayer for increased grace and for the quickening of our graces; particularly that we may ever obey our Lord Jesus Christ and love our Father. The singular number of the verbs "comforted" and "stablish" (which, of course, is not reproduced in the English) intimates the unity of the two Persons, which are the common Objects of the verbs—compare 1 Thessalonians 3:11. The equality of the Persons is seen in these petitions being addressed jointly to Both. It only remains for us to point out that the "hath loved" of 2 Thessalonians 2:16 looks back to verse 13, the "good hope" to verse 14, and the petitions of verse 17 to the exhortation of verse 15.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

32. Jericho, Part 2

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour” (Jos 6:2). That gracious declaration was not only a challenge unto the exercise of faith, and an evidence of God’s bounty, but it was also designed to subdue all the workings of self-sufficiency. The proud flesh remains in all God’s people, and the best of them are prone to take unto themselves that credit and praise which belong alone unto God. But that “see [take note of, keep steadily in mind, that] *I have given* into thine hand Jericho” was meant to exclude all boasting. It was not only a word to encourage and animate, but also one to *humble*, signifying that the success of this venture must be ascribed unto the Lord Himself, apart from whom *we* “can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). Victory over our enemies must never be ascribed to our own prowess: rather are we to aver, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth’s sake” (Psa 115:1). Jericho was Israel’s by divine donation, and therefore, its capture was to be attributed wholly unto the God of all grace. “What hast thou that thou didst not receive? now if thou didst *receive* it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?” (1Co 4:7). What need there is for that truth to be pressed today upon a boastful and vainglorious Christendom!

When the people of Lystra saw the healing of the cripple, they sought to render divine homage unto Barnabas and Paul, which, when they beheld, “rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out, And saying, Sirs, why do ye these things? We also are men of like passions with you” (Act 14:14-15). O for more of that self-effacing spirit. How dishonouring it is unto God to have so many professing Christians eulogizing worms of the dust and using such expressions as “He is a great man,” “a remarkable preacher,” “a wonderful Bible teacher.” What glory doth the Lord get therefrom? None. No wonder the unction of the Spirit is now so generally withheld! Moreover, nothing is so apt to destroy a preacher’s usefulness as to puff him up with flattery; certainly nothing is so insulting to the Spirit and more calculated to cause Him to withdraw His blessing than such idolatrous man-worship. How much better to say, “Such a preacher is highly favoured of the Lord in being so gifted by Him.” “The pastor was much helped by God in his sermon this morning.” “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights” (Jam 1:17); and therefore, it behoves us to thankfully acknowledge the Giver and freely render unto Him undivided praise for every blessing which He vouchsafes us through His servants, whether it comes in an oral or written form.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, See, I have given into thine hand Jericho, and the king thereof, and the mighty men of valour.” Taking that verse as a whole, we may perceive the Lord’s concern for His own honour. He is very jealous of the same, saying, “I will not give my glory unto another” (Isa 48:11). Let us not forget that Herod was eaten up of worms “because he gave not God the glory” (Act 12:23)! It was to prevent Israel’s committing this sin the Lord here made this affirmation unto their leader. It was in order that His people might freely own, “he hath done marvellous things: *his* right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory” (Psa 98:1). How often the Scriptures record such statements as these: “To day the LORD hath wrought salvation [deliverance] in Israel” (1Sa 11:13); “So the LORD saved Israel that day” (1Sa 14:23); “The LORD wrought a great salvation for all Israel” (1Sa 19:5); “The LORD wrought a great victory that day” (2Sa 23:10); “By him [Naaman] the LORD had given deliverance unto Syria” (2Ki 5:1). Alas, how little is such language now heard! David had been taught this God-honouring and self-abasing truth, as is shown by his words, “Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight” (Psa 144:1). Such should be the acknowledgement made by us in connection with our spiritual warfare and every success granted us in the Christian life.

“And ye shall compass the city, all ye men of war, and go round about the city once. Thus shalt thou do six days. And seven priests shall bear before the ark seven trumpets of rams’ horns: and the seventh day ye shall compass the city seven times, and the priests shall blow with the trumpets. And it shall come to pass, that when they make a long blast with the ram’s horn, and when ye hear the sound of the trumpet, all the people shall shout with a great shout; and the wall of the city shall fall down flat, and the people shall ascend up every man straight before him” (Jos 6:3-5). In view of the preceding verse, that may strike some of our readers as a very strange requirement. If the Lord had definitely given Jericho into the hands of Joshua, why were such elaborate preparations as these necessary for its overthrow? Let those who feel the

force of any such difficulty weigh attentively what we are about to say. In reality, those verses exemplify and illustrate a principle which it is most important for us to apprehend. That principle may be stated thus: The disclosure of God's gracious purpose and the absolute certainty of its accomplishment in no wise renders needless the discharge of our responsibilities. God's assuring us of the sureness of the end does not set aside the indispensability of the use of means. Thus, here again, as everywhere, we see preserved the balance of Truth.

So far from the divine promises being designed to promote inactivity on our part, they are given as a spur unto the same, to assure us that if our efforts square with the divine Rule, they will not be in vain. The gracious declaration that God had given Jericho into the hand of Israel did not discharge them from the performance of their duty, but was to assure them of certain success in the same. That principle operates *throughout* in the accomplishment of the divine purpose. The truth of election is not revealed in order to license a spirit of fatalism, but to rejoice our hearts by the knowledge that the whole of Adam's race is not doomed to destruction. Nor are the elect mechanically delivered from destruction apart from any action of theirs, for though they be "chosen...to salvation," yet it is "through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth" (2Th 2:13)—unless the Truth be embraced by them, no salvation would be theirs, for "he that believeth not shall be damned" (Mar 16:16). Likewise, the revealed truth that Christ will yet "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:11), that "all that the Father giveth [Him] *shall* come to [Him]" (Joh 6:37), does not render needless the preaching of the Gospel to every creature—for that preaching is the very means which God has appointed and which the Holy Spirit makes effectual in drawing unto Christ those for whom He died. We must not divide what God has joined together.

It is the sundering of those things which God has connected—wherein He has made the one dependent upon another—which has wrought so much evil and caused so many useless divisions among His people. For example, in the twin truths of divine preservation and Christian perseverance. Our assurance of glorification in no wise sets aside the need for care and caution, self-denial, and striving against sin on our part. There is a narrow way to be trodden if Life is to be reached (Mat 7:14), a race to be run if the prize is to be secured (Heb 12:1; Phi 3:14). We are indeed "kept by the power of God," yet "through faith" (1Pe 1:5) and not irrespective of its exercise; and faith eyes and makes use of the divine precepts equally with the divine promises, and heeds God's admonitions and warnings as well as appropriates His comforts and encouragements. God has nowhere declared that He will preserve the reckless and presumptuous. He preserves in faith and holiness, and not in carnality and worldliness. Christ has guaranteed the eternal security of a certain company, but He was careful to first describe the marks of those who belong to it: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and *they* shall never perish" (Joh 10:27-28), but no such assurance is given unto any who disregard His voice and follow a course of self-will and self-pleasing. God's promise of Heaven to the believer is far from signifying that he will not have to fight his way there.

The appointed means must never be separated from the appointed end. Strength for the body is obtained through the mouth, and health is not maintained without observing the rules of hygiene. Crops will not be produced unless the ground be prepared and sown. Yet in connection with spiritual matters, we need to be particularly careful that we employ only those methods and use none but those means which God has appointed. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive *lawfully*" (2Ti 2:5). For *us* to determine the methods and select those means which appeal most to us when engaged in the service of God is presumptuous, a species of self-will, laying us open to the charge of "Who hath required *this* at your hand"? (Isa 1:12); and for us to ask God's blessing upon the same is only seeking to make Him of our mind. Let us not forget the solemn warning pointed by the death of Uzzah, when the Lord God made a breach in Israel because they "sought him not after the due order" (1Ch 15:13). We must keep closely to God's "due order" if we are to have His approbation. That was one of the outstanding lessons here taught Joshua. He was not left free to follow his own devices, but must adhere strictly to the plan God gave him, following out His instructions to the very letter if Jericho was to fall before Israel.

How passing strange those instructions must have appeared! How utterly inadequate such means for such an enterprise! How futile would such a procedure seem unto carnal reason! "No trenches were to be opened, no batteries erected, no battering-rams drawn up, nor any military preparations made"—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Who ever heard of a mighty fortress being completely demolished in response to a company of people walking around it? Ah, God's ways are not only very different from man's, but they are designed to stain his pride and secure the glory unto Himself. The leader and lawgiver of Israel was pre-

served in a frail ark of bulrushes. The mighty giant of the Philistines was overcome by a sling and a stone. The prophet Elijah was sustained by a widow's handful of meal. The forerunner of Christ dwelt in the wilderness, had his raiment of camel's hair and a leathern girdle, and fed upon locusts and wild honey. The Saviour Himself was born in a stable and laid in a manger. The ones whom He selected to be His ambassadors were for the most part unlettered fishermen. What striking illustrations are these "that which is highly esteemed among men is abomination in the sight of God" (Luk 16:15)! Yet how needful it is to keep this principle before us!

Had Joshua called a council of war and consulted with the heads of the tribes as to what *they* deemed the best policy to adopt, what conflicting advice he had most probably received, what various methods of assault had been advocated. One would have reasoned that the only way to subdue Jericho was by the starving out of its inhabitants through a protracted siege. Another would have counseled the use of ladders to scale its walls by men heavily mailed and armed. A third would have argued that heavy battering-rams would be more effective and less costly in lives to the attackers. While a fourth would have suggested a surprise attack by secretly tunneling under the walls. Each would have leaned unto his own understanding, and deemed his plan the best. But Joshua conferred not with flesh and blood, but received his commission direct from the Lord; and therein he has left an example for all His servants to follow. The minister of the Gospel is responsible to Christ: he is *His* servant, called and commissioned by Him, and from Him alone must he take his orders. He has no authority except what Christ has given him; and he needs no more. Joshua did not refer the instructions he had received from God to the judgment of the priests and elders and ask their opinion on the same, but instead acted promptly upon them, counting upon the divine blessing, however his fellows might regard them.

"When the Lord effects His purposes by such means and instruments as we deem *adequate*, our views are apt to terminate upon *them*, and to overlook *Him* 'who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will' (Eph 1:11). To obviate this propensity, the Lord sometimes deviates from the common track and works by methods or instruments which in themselves appear not at all suited to produce the intended effect; nay, sometimes have no real connection with it (Num 20:6-9; Eze 37:1-10; Joh 9:4-7). But it is our duty to use only those means which the Lord appoints or allows, to submit to His will, and depend upon His blessing; and with patient waiting and self-denying diligence, to expect the event: and we shall thus succeed as far as is conducive to our real good. He takes peculiar pleasure in leading men's attention to His own truths and ordinances, in exercising their faith and patience, in inuring them to submit their understandings implicitly to His teaching and their wills to His authority, and in securing to Himself their praises and thankful acknowledgements. In promoting true religion, especially, He works by means and instruments which the proud, the learned, and the wealthy of this world generally despise. The doctrine of a crucified Saviour, God manifested in the flesh, as the only foundation of a sinner's hope of acceptance, and the only source of sanctifying grace; preached by ministers, frequently of obscure birth and moderate abilities, and destitute of the advantages of eminent learning or eloquence; sometimes even homely in their appearance and address"—Thomas Scott (1747-1821).

Looking more closely now at the instructions which Joshua received from the Lord on this occasion, we see that once more "the ark" was given the place of honour, being made central in the order of the procession. First were to proceed the "men of war," then came the ark with seven priests in front of it with "trumpets of rams' horns," and behind it came all the body of the people. The ark was the recognized symbol of Jehovah's presence, and its being carried before the congregation was to intimate the victory was *from Him*. Very much indeed turns upon our realization of the divine presence—both as a restraint upon the flesh, and a stimulant to the spirit. When assured that the Lord is not only for us but *with us*, fear gives place to holy confidence. Deeply important is it for the servant of Christ not only to adhere strictly to the terms of His commission, but also to rest upon His blessed promise, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end" (Mat 28:19-20). Equally necessary for the rank and file of God's people to lay hold of that word, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). Joshua had received personal assurance of this by the appearing to him of the "captain of the LORD'S host" (Jos 5:13-15), and by the prominence accorded the ark: the whole congregation was given a visible reminder of the same fact. All were to move with their eyes fixed upon the Captain of their salvation, for none could stand before Him.

But the ark was also the repository of the tables of stone, on which were inscribed the Ten Commandments. It therefore denoted that Israel now marched as subject to the divine Law, for only as they acted in obedience to its terms could success be expected. As was pointed out in our articles on the crossing of the

Jordan, Israel marched into Canaan *led by the Law*: so here we are shown their conquest of the land depended upon their compliance with its requirements. But more: the presence of the ark here intimated that the Law was the minister of vengeance to the Canaanites—their cup of iniquity was now full, and they must suffer the due reward of the same. Here the Law was “the minister of death,” as the sequel demonstrated: see Joshua 6:21.

ENJOYING GOD'S BEST

Part 4

Let us now point out that the same principle holds good in connection with the divine government under the new covenant as obtained under the old. "And he did not many mighty works there *because* of their unbelief" (Mat 13:58). What place has such a statement as that in the theology of hyper-Calvinists? None whatever. Yet it should have; otherwise, why has it been placed upon record if it has no analogy today? As Matthew Henry (1662-1714) rightly insisted, "Unbelief is the great obstacle to Christ's favour... The Gospel is 'the power of God unto salvation,' but then it is 'to every one that believeth' (Rom 1:16). So that if mighty works be not wrought in us, it is not for want of power or grace in Christ, but want of faith in us." That was putting the emphasis where it must be placed if human responsibility is to be enforced. It was nothing but hardness of heart which precluded them from sharing the benefits of Christ's benevolence. When the father whose son was possessed by the demon that the disciples had failed to expel said unto the great Physician, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us," He at once turned the "if" back again upon him, saying, "If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth" (Mar 9:22-23).

That we are the losers by our folly and that we bring trouble down upon ourselves by unbelief is illustrated in the case of the father of John the Baptist. When the angel of the Lord appeared unto him during the discharge of his priestly office in the temple, and announced that his prayer was answered and his wife should bear a son, instead of expressing gratitude at the good news and bursting forth in thanksgiving unto God, Zacharias voiced his doubts, saying, "Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years" (Luk 1:18). Whereupon the angel declared, "Behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, *because* thou believest not my words" (Luk 1:20), upon which John Gill (1697-1771) said, "He was stricken with deafness because he hearkened not to the angel's words, and dumbness because from the unbelief of his heart, he objected to them. We learn from hence, what an evil unbelief is, and how much resented by God, and how much it becomes us to heed that it prevails not in us." To which he might well have added: and how God manifests His resentment against such conduct by sending adverse providences upon us!

Should it be said that the above incident occurred before the day of Pentecost—a pointless objection—then let us call attention to the fact that at a very early date *after* the establishment of Christianity, God, in an extraordinary manner, visited with temporal judgments those who displeased and provoked Him. A clear case in point is the visible manner in which He dealt with Ananias and Sapphira (Act 5). So, too, when Herod gratefully accepted the idolatrous adulations of the populace, instead of rebuking their sinful flattery, we are told, "And immediately the angel of the Lord smote him, *because* he gave not God the glory: and he was eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost" (Act 12:23). God *does* suit His governmental ways according to the conduct of men, be they unbelievers or believers. Not always so plainly or so promptly as in the examples just adduced, yet with sufficient clearness and frequency that all impartial and discerning observers may perceive that nothing happens by chance or mere accident, but is traceable to an antecedent cause or occasion; that His providences are regulated by righteousness.

"For I verily, as absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that hath so done this deed, In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,... To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1Co 5:3-5). A member of the Corinthian assembly had committed a grave offence, which was known publicly. For the same, he was dealt with drastically: something more than a bare act of ex-communication or being "disfellowshipped" being meant in the above verses. The guilty one was committed unto Satan for him to severely afflict his body—which is evidently meant by "the flesh" being here contrasted with "the spirit." That Satan has the power of afflicting the body we know from Job 2:7; Luke 13:16, etc. And that the apostles, in the early days of Christianity, were endowed with the authority to deliver erring ones unto Satan to be disciplined by him, is evident from 2 Corinthians 10:8; 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:20. Thus we see how a Christian was here visited with some painful disease because of his sins.

It is sadly possible for Christians to miss God's best through failure in their *home life*. This is evident from 1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; *that* your prayers be *not*

hindered.” Incidentally, that verse inculcates family worship, the husband and wife praying together. Further, it teaches that their treatment of one another will have at close bearing upon their joint supplications, for if domestic harmony does not obtain, what unity of spirit can there be when they come together before the Throne of Grace? By necessary implication that also shows how essential it is that they be equally “yoked together” for “what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness?” (2Co 6:14). What joint act of worship is possible between a child of God and a child of the devil, between a regenerate soul and a worldling? Yet even where both the husband and the wife be true Christians, they are required to regulate their individual conduct by the precepts which God has given unto each of them: the wife that she be “in subjection to” her husband and diligent in cultivating “a meek and quiet spirit” (1Pe 3:1-6); the husband that he heeds the injunctions here given; otherwise their petitions will be “hindered,” and God’s best forfeited.

First, the husband is to act according to his knowledge that his wife is “the weaker vessel,” which is not said in disparagement of her sex. As one has pointed out, “It is no insult to the vine to say that it is weaker than the tree to which it clings, or to the rose to say it is weaker than the bush that bears it. The strongest things are not always therefore the best—either the most beautiful or the most useful.” Second, as such he is to “give honour her”: that is, his superior strength is to be engaged for her defence and welfare, rendering all possible assistance in lightening her burdens. Her very weakness is to serve as a constant appeal for a patient tenderness and forbearance toward her infirmities. Furthermore, he is ever to act in accordance with her spiritual equality, that they are “heirs together of the grace of life” (1Pe 3:7). Not only should the love which he has for her make him diligent in promoting her well-being, but the grace of which he has been made a partaker should operate in seeking the good of her soul and furthering her spiritual interests: discussing together the things of God, reading edifying literature to her when she is relaxing, pouring out together their thanksgivings unto God and making known their requests at the family altar.

Then it is, when those divine requirements are met by both wife and husband, that they may plead that promise, “That if two of you *shall agree* on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven” (Mat 18:19). That agreement is far more than verbal or even mental: it is a spiritual one. The Greek word is *sumphoneo*, and literally signifies “to sound together.” It is a musical term, as when two different notes or instruments make a harmonious sound. Thus, there must be oneness of heart, unity of spirit, concord of soul, in order for two Christians to “agree” before the Throne of Grace, for their joint petitions to be harmonious and melodious unto the Lord. It is music in the ear of their Father when the spiritual chords of a Christian husband and a Christian wife vibrate in unison at the family altar. But that can only obtain as they singly and mutually conduct themselves *as* “heirs together of the grace of life” (1Pe 3:7), their home life being ordered by the Word of God; everything in it done for His glory: the wife acting toward her husband as the Church is required to do as the Lamb’s Wife; the husband treating her as Christ loves and cherishes His Church.

Contrariwise, if the wife rebels against the position which God has assigned her and refused to own her husband as her head and lord, yielding obedience to him in everything which is not contrary to the divine statutes, then friction and strife will soon obtain, for a godly husband must not yield to the compromising plea of “peace at any price.” Equally so, if the husband takes unlawful advantage of his headship and be tyrannical, then, though the wife bear it meekly, her spirit is crushed, and love is chilled. If he treat her more like a servant or slave than a wife, the Spirit will be grieved, and he will be made to smart. If he be selfishly forgetful of her infirmities—especially those involved in childbearing—if he be not increasingly diligent in seeking to lighten her load and brighten her lot as the family grows, if he exercises little concern and care for her health and comfort, then she will feel and grieve over such callousness, and harmony of spirit will be gone. In such a case, their prayers will be “hindered,” or, as the Greek word signifies, “cut off”—the very opposite of “agree” in Matthew 18:19! By domestic discord, the heart is discomposed for supplication, and thus, God’s best is missed.

From the second and third chapters of the Revelation, we learn that the Lord treats with local churches on the same principles as He does with individuals: that they too enter into or miss His best according to their own wisdom or folly. Thus, to the pastor of the Ephesian assembly, He declared, “I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; *or else* I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev 2:4-5)—how many such a “candlestick” *has* thus been removed! To the careless and compromising ones at Pergamos, who then suffered in their midst those who held doctrine

which He hated, the Lord solemnly threatened, "Repent; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight *against* them with the sword of my mouth" (Rev 2:14-16)—those churches which are slack in maintaining holy discipline invite divine judgment. While to the boastful and worldly Laodiceans, the Lord declared, "I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev 3:16)—I will no longer own thee as My witness.

Writing on the need of members of a local church having "the same care one for another" (1Co 12:25) and pointing out how that James 2:1-4 supplies an example of a company of saints where the opposite practice obtained, one wrote: "Instead of having the same care, when we make a difference between him 'with a gold ring, in goodly apparel' and him or her with 'vile raiment' or poor clothing, we are being 'partial'...Do not be deceived with the thought that God does not behold such partiality: He will not prosper that church, but the members of the whole body will be made to suffer from this lack of 'the same care one for another.'" And we would point out that this brief quotation is not taken from any Arminian publication, but from a recent issue of a magazine by the most hyper-Calvinist body we know of in the U.S.A. What we would particularly direct attention to in it is that when such a carnal church is "made to suffer" because of the pride and selfishness of some of its officers or members, then it has *missed* God's best. How many such churches are there in Christendom today!

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1Co 11:30). Here is a clear case in point where many Christians missed God's best, and brought down upon themselves His temporal judgments because of their own misconduct. "For this cause" refers to their having eaten of the Lord's supper "unworthily" or unbecomingly—see verses 20 and 21. When numerous cases of sickness and death occur in a Christian assembly, they are not to be regarded as a matter of course, but made the subject of a searching examination before God and a humbling inquiring of Him. God was not dealing with these Corinthian saints in mere sovereignty, but in governmental righteousness, disciplining them for a grave offence. He was manifesting His displeasure at them because of their sins, afflicting them with bodily sickness—which in many instances ended fatally—on account of their irreverence and intemperance, as the "For this cause" unmistakably shows. This, too, has been recorded for our instruction—warning us to avoid sin in every form, and signifying that the commission of it will expose us to the divine displeasure, even though we be God's dear children. Here, too, we are shown that our entering into or missing of God's best has a real influence upon the health of our bodies!

That same passage goes on to inform us how we *may avert* such disciplinary affliction! "For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (1Co 11:31). There is a divine judgment to which the saints are amenable, a judgment pertaining to this life, which is exercised by Christ as the Judge of His people (1Pe 4:17). To Him each local church is accountable; unto Him each individual believer is responsible for his thoughts, words, and deeds. As such, He walks "in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks" (Rev 2:1). Nothing escapes His notice, for "his eyes were as a flame of fire" (Rev 19:12), and before Him "all things are naked and opened" (Heb 4:13). Not that He is strict to impute every iniquity, or rigorous to punish, for who then could stand before Him? The Lord is in no haste to correct His redeemed, but is slow to anger and loathe to chasten. Nevertheless, He is holy, and will maintain the honour of His own house; and therefore does He call upon His erring ones to repent under threat of judgment, if they fail to do so. Not that He ever imposes any *penal* inflictions for their sins, for He personally suffered and atoned for *them*; but out of the love He bears them, He makes known how they may avoid His governmental corrections.

"For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." There are some of the Lord's people who—when they be overtaken in a fault—expect immediate chastisement at His hands; and through fear of it, their knees are feeble and their hands hang down. But that is going to the opposite extreme from careless indifference—both of which are condemned by the above verse. It is a law of Christ's judgment that "if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged." That is, if we make conscience of having offended, and go directly to the Judge, unsparingly condemning ourselves and contritely confessing the fault to Him, He will pardon and *pass it by*. Though they be far from parallel, yet we may illustrate by the case of Nineveh under the preaching of Jonah. When the prophet announced, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown" (Jon 3:4), more was intended than was expressed. He was not there proclaiming God's inexorable fiat, but was sounding an alarm to operate as a means of moral awakening. That "forty days" opened a door of hope for them, and was tantamount to saying, Upon genuine repentance and true reformation of conduct, a reprieve will be granted. That is no mere inference of ours, but a fact clearly attested in the immediate sequel.

“So the people of Nineveh *believed God*, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth” (Jon 3:5); while the king published a decree to his subjects: “Cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?” And we are told, “And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not” (Jon 3:5-10). God’s “repenting” here means that He altered in His *bearing* toward them because their conduct had changed for the better, thereby averting the judgment with which He had threatened them. Now if God dealt thus with a heathen people upon their repentance and reformation, how much more will Christ turn away the rod of chastisement from His redeemed when they truly repent of their sins and humble themselves before Him! For *them* there is no mere “who can tell if God will turn and repent,” but the definite and blessed assurance that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1Jo 1:9).

“For if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged.” O what tenderness and divine longsufferance breathe in those words! That even when we have erred—yea, sinned—grievously, a way is opened for us whereby we may escape the rod. Ah, but what divine wisdom and righteousness are also evinced by them! “If we would *judge* ourselves,” we should escape the disciplinary consequences of our sins. And why so? Because the rod is no longer needed by us. Why not? Because in such a case, the desired effect has been wrought in us without the use of it! What is God’s design *in* chastisement? To bring the refractory one to his senses, to make him realize he has erred and displeased the Lord, to cause him to right what is wrong by repentance, confession, and reformation. When *those* fruits are borne, then we *have* heard “the rod” (Mic 6:9), and it has accomplished its intended work. Very well then, if we truly, unsparingly, and contritely “judge” ourselves before God for our sins, then the rod is not required. Having condemned himself, turned back into the way of holiness, sought and obtained cleansing from all unrighteousness, he is brought to the very point—only more quickly and easily!—to which chastening would bring him!

“For if we *would* judge ourselves”: those very words seem to imply there is both a slowness and a reluctance in the saints so to do—a thought which is confirmed in the next verse. Alas, many of those who have left their first love are in such a backslidden and sickly case spiritually that they are incapable of judging themselves. Their conscience has become so dull through the frequent excusing of what they deemed trifling things, their walk is so careless, that they offend their Judge and are virtually unaware of doing so. “Strangers have devoured his strength, and he knoweth it not: yea, gray hairs [the mark of decline and decay] are here and there upon him, yet he knoweth not” (Hos 7:9). Since, then, they are *not* exercised over their sins, the rod must awaken them; for their holy Lord will not tolerate unconfessed sins in His own. But others, who have not deteriorated to such a sad degree, are conscious of their faults, yet nevertheless do not judge themselves for the same. Why? What causes such reluctance to humble themselves before God? What, but accursed pride! In such case, His mighty hand will bring them down, and hence it follows:

“But when we *are* judged, we are *chastened* of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (1Co 11:32). Such was the case with the Corinthians. They sinned again and again in different ways, and were unexercised. They were “carnal,” and among them were envying and strife—yet they judged not themselves. The Lord gave them space for repentance, but they repented not; until, in the profanation of His holy supper, He was obliged to act, visiting them with bodily sickness and death. Thus, from the words, “when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord,” the conclusion is unescapable: we have failed *to condemn* ourselves. As it is a rule of Christ’s kingdom that when His people own their offences and turn from the same, He spares the rod; so it is equally a rule in His kingdom that when they sin and confess it not, but continue in the same, then He chastens them. And there is infinite mercy in that, for it is *that* they “should not be condemned with the world.” His own wayward children are chastised here in this world, but the ungodly will bear the full punishment of their sins for ever and ever in Hell! Sin *must be* “condemned”: either by us, or by the righteous Judge—here, or hereafter. How much better to judge ourselves, and thereby escape *His* judgment!

THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

16. *The Holy Bible, Part 8*

11. *Its historical parts.* Much of the Bible consists of historical narratives, yet both their contents and the style in which they are written at once distinguish them from all others. They cover a period of no less than four thousand years! The Old Testament contains the oldest records of the world, dating far back of the chronicles of men—yea, of the dimmest traditions of all nations, save the Jewish—and therefore, the Scriptures of the Old Testament are many centuries older than any other historical records. Herodotus, whom literati have styled “the Father of history,” was born a thousand years after Moses!—the penman employed by God in writing the Pentateuch. They not only impart information which none of the writings of antiquity contains, but are in striking contrast with the legendary fables of early Greece and Rome. The Bible alone supplies us with any knowledge of the affairs of this world during its first fifteen centuries. Antedating all human historians, God Himself has made known to us how the earth came into existence, how the nations originated, and has given a brief but succinct account of the antediluvian era which terminated in the Flood—all of which matters are entirely beyond our ken.

The opening verses of Genesis stand in a class entirely by themselves. Their teaching upon the creation of the universe out of nothing is quite peculiar to Holy Writ. Such an idea is not to be found in the most rational and refined systems of secular writers. Even where an intelligent Architect was conceived of, as in the speculations of Plato and Aristotle, yet he was portrayed as working upon existing material, on eternal matter. While the hypothesis favoured by the earlier Egyptians and Babylonians was that everything, including the stars and this earth, has developed from the inherent power of the sun. For reconditeness of theme and yet simplicity of language, for comprehensiveness of scope and yet brevity of description, for scientific exactitude and yet the absence of technical terms, nothing can be found in all literature which for a moment compares with the opening chapter of the Bible. Its divine revelation stands out in marked separation, not only from the meaningless cosmogonies of the ancients and the senseless mythologies of the heathen, but equally from the laborious jargon of our moderns who essay to write upon the origin of things, and which are out of date almost as soon as published.

Again: the historical portions of the Bible alone supply us with a satisfactory explanation of the present state of the world. As was pointed out in the earlier articles of this series, the earth exhibits numerous marks of intelligence and benignity, yet they are neither of unvaried orderliness nor of unmixed benevolence. If on the one hand we behold the fertile fields and beauties of nature; on the other, there are icy wastes, vast deserts, death-dealing volcanoes. It is apparent that this earth has experienced some fearful convulsion, by which its original structure has been deranged. It is still subject to earthquakes, devastating tornadoes, tidal waves. Man and this earth are manifestly adapted to each other; nevertheless, there are many examples of such discrepancy. Why is this? Certainly not because of any imperfection in the Creator. Then why? The Bible alone accounts for these abnormalities; and it does so in a way without the wisdom and power of the Creator being impeached. It reveals that, as the result of sin, God is now dealing in justice and holiness with His refractory subjects, as well as in goodness and mercy with the creatures of His hand.

The uniqueness of Scripture history appears not only in the disclosures which are made, but also in its *style* and *omissions*. Its method of chronicling events is radically different from all other histories. It only just touches upon, and often entirely ignores, matters which had been of most interest to men of the world, whereas it frequently treats at length of things which they had deemed of no importance. How amazingly brief is the account given of the creating and furnishing of this earth! Man had never restricted *that* to a single chapter, and then have devoted more than ten others to the tabernacle and its erection. No indeed: the wisdom of this world had regarded the grand edifice of the universe as worthy of a much fuller description than that of a religious tent! Nothing is told us of the “seven wonders” of the ancient world. Men of renown are passed by in silence, while the pastoral lives of insignificant individuals are narrated. The great empires of antiquity are scarcely alluded to, and then only as they touch the interests of Israel. A principle of selection obtains such as no secular historians adopt, and the events singled out are set down as a plain record of facts, without any attempt of the writers to mingle their own reflections with them.

The *design* of sacred history is entirely different from that of all others. Its aim is not simply to preserve the memory of certain occurrences, but to teach us the knowledge of God and His salvation, and to show us our deep need of the same. Its purpose is not merely to narrate bare facts, but rather to impart im-

portant moral instruction. It does very much more than convey to us a knowledge of events, an account of which is nowhere else obtainable—the agency of *God* in connection with those events is constantly brought out. That which uninspired historians either overlook or deliberately ignore is made prominent, namely, the divine displeasure against sin. The historical portions of Scripture display to us throughout the excellencies of the divine character and set before us His governing of this world. Sacred history is very much more than an authentic record of human affairs: it exhibits the perversity and folly, the instability and unbelief of human nature, and reveals the springs from which our actions proceed. In its narratives the thoughts and secret motives of men are discovered, and that in a manner and to an extent which none but the great Searcher of hearts was capable of doing. The real character of man is unveiled as in no other writings.

“The Bible describes, in action and exhibition, the perfections of Jehovah as fully as the proclamation in which He declares Himself to be longsuffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin. It delineates the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart, as forcibly and distinctly as the annunciations of the prophets, when they cry aloud and spare not”—Robert Haldane (1764-1842). It emphasizes the providential interposition of God in human affairs and His ways with men. Therein we are shown what a mad and bitter thing it is for either an individual or a nation to forsake the living God; and, contrariwise, what blessings attend those who walk in subjection to and fellowship with Him. Consequently, its narratives are of great practical value: not only in a general way by showing how God punishes sin and rewards righteousness, but by specific and personal illustrations of the same. Vital ethical and spiritual lessons are thereby inculcated, and from the lives of different individuals, we are taught what examples are worthy of our emulation and what evils and dangers it will be our wisdom and profit to avoid. Thus, those sacred narratives afford us scope for constant meditation. Into the inspired history is most wondrously interweaved all the doctrines and duties promulgated by Christ and His apostles.

But the grand design of the Old Testament was to make manifest the need for, the nature of, and the various preparations made unto the redemptive work of Christ. Everything else was subordinated unto an anticipation of the all-important advent of God’s Son to this earth and the inauguration of the Christian era. As there is one central object in the heavens which far surpasses in glory all other planets, so the person and mission of the Lord Jesus Christ is accorded the place of pre-eminence in the Sacred Volume. *That* was what regulated the principle of selection as to what should or should not be recorded in the Bible. Hence it is that the history of Adam and his posterity during the first two thousand years is condensed into but eleven chapters, and why very little indeed is said about them: special attention being directed only unto those individuals from which the promised Messiah was to spring. For the same reason, from Genesis 12 onwards, we are occupied almost entirely with the history of Abraham and his descendants. The lives of the patriarchs are described in much more detail, that we may perceive the sovereignty and grace of God in His choice of and dealings with them; and that we may obtain a better view of the stock from which Christ, according to His humanity, was to issue.

Most of the Old Testament is a history of the nation of Israel, and it too is written in a manner quite different from all others, for as one has well said, “It is recorded by the unerring hand of Truth.” No effort is made to magnify the virtues of Israel, nor is there the least attempt to hide their vices. Had those records been composed by uninspired Jews, then obviously they had laboured to present the most attractive picture possible of their own people; and therefore, no reference had been made unto their base ingratitude and hard-heartedness. Particularly would a forgery have sought to impress other nations with the might, valour, and military genius of the Jews. But so far from that, their faint-heartedness and defeats are frequently recorded. The capture of Jericho and the conquest of Canaan are not attributed to the brilliance of Joshua and the bravery of his men, but to the Lord’s showing Himself strong in their behalf. Nor did the victories granted them proceed from partiality or caprice, for only while they walked in obedience to God’s law did He crown their efforts with success. It is noteworthy that the sacred history of the Old Testament ends at the point where credible secular history begins, for the occupation of Palestine by the Persians, Greeks, and Romans is recorded by Xenophon and his successors.

12. *Its typical teachings.* Since the incarnation of His Son, with the attendant blessings of redemption, was the grand object contemplated by God from the dawn of human history, He ordered everything in the early ages of the world to pave the way for the same, particularly in the educating of His people concerning it. It pleased God to first preach the Gospel to them by means of parabolical representation, by symbolical instruction and typical occurrences which foreshadowed the person and work of the future Redeemer. Therein lies the key which opens many a chapter of the Old Testament, which to those lacking it appears

not only of little interest, but unworthy of a place in a divine revelation. But once their scope and significance be recognized, we perceive in those ancient institutions and religious rites such a wondrous anticipation of and perfect correspondence with what is set forth more openly in the New Testament as no human wisdom could have devised. There is a pre-arranged harmony between type and antitype as no mortal could invent; a prophetic meaning in them which only God could have given. The fitness of the types and the agreement of the antitypes lie not so much in their external resemblances as in the essential oneness of the ideas they embody and express and their relations to each other.

The types are so many outward emblems and visible signs appointed by God to portray spiritual objects. They were so constructed and arranged as to express in symbolical form the great truths and principles which are common alike to all dispensations, such as the holiness of God and its requirements, the sinfulness of sin and its polluting effects, the necessity for a Mediator. Under the Levitical ceremonies, there was set forth a palpable exhibition of sin and salvation, the purification of the heart, and the dedication of the person and life unto God. His method of revelation was first to portray heavenly things by means of earthly, to make known eternal realities through temporal events, to exhibit to the physical senses what was later presented more directly to the mind. Thereby was indicated on a lower plane what was to be accomplished on a far higher one. Visible things were made to image and prepare the way for the disclosure of the more spiritual mysteries of Christ's kingdom. In that way the earlier dispensations were made the servants for getting ready the stage of things to come. God so modeled the institutions of Israel's worship as to set before their eyes the cardinal doctrines of Christianity, the one being a stepping-stone to the other. During the immaturity of God's family celestial things were more easily grasped when set forth in a corporate form than by abstract statements about them.

The events recorded in the Old Testament were actual occurrences, yet they also presaged the more excellent things which were promised. Divine providence so moulded human history that in many instances there was made a typical representation of the work of redemption. That was set forth, in its broad outlines, in the days of Noah. The fearful flood which God sent upon the world of the ungodly made known His intense hatred of sin and the punishment which it entails. Yet before that judgment fell, merciful warning was made and space given for repentance; but the wicked repented not. In the ark, we behold the gracious provision which God made for those who feared Him. Noah and his family sought refuge therein, and accordingly, they were preserved from the overflowing scourge. That ark was the *only* place of deliverance. It was therefore a prophetic sign of Christ as the sole Saviour of sinners, and the security of those who sheltered therein shadowed forth the deliverance from the wrath to come of those who flee to Christ. There was room in the ark for all who availed themselves of it, and the Redeemer has promised to receive and cast out none who come to Him. The dove sent forth by Noah was an emblem of the Holy Spirit, and her return to the ark with an olive leaf in her mouth spoke of that assurance which believers have that God is now at peace with them.

The whole history of Israel was a typical one and was made to adumbrate the experience of God's people in the days of their unregeneracy, the provisions made by God for their deliverance, and the complete salvation which He effects for them. The cruel bondage suffered by the Hebrews in Egypt under the merciless oppression of Pharaoh supplies a vivid picture of our natural servitude unto sin and Satan. Their crying in the brick kilns and their groaning under the whips of their taskmasters spoke of those smitings of conscience and sorrows of heart when God convicts us of our rebellion against Him and when He makes sin to become exceedingly burdensome and bitter to our souls. The utter inability of those Israelitish slaves to free themselves from the galling yoke of their masters portrayed the helplessness of the natural man, his complete impotency to deliver himself from the dominion of sin. The sovereign grace of God in raising up a deliverer in the person of Moses pointed forward to the Redeemer emancipating His people. The appointment of the lamb and the efficacy of its sprinkled blood to shelter from the angel of death on the Passover night revealed yet more clearly what is now proclaimed by the Gospel. While the destruction of Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, and Israel's sight of the "Egyptians dead upon the sea shore" (Exo 14:30), told of the completeness of the Christian's salvation—the putting away of his sins from before the face of God.

The subsequent history of Israel after their miraculous exodus from Egypt while on their way to Canaan foreshadowed in a remarkable and unmistakable manner the experiences of Christians from the time they are born again until their entrance into heaven. Israel's long journey across the wilderness supplies a graphic picture of the believer's passage through this world. Once the heart has been really captivated and

won by the loveliness of Christ, the things of time and sense lose their charm, and this world becomes a dreary desert to him. As the wilderness, with its sterile sands and waterless wastes, was a place of trials unto the Hebrews, so this world is made the place of testing unto the graces of the saints. But as God ministered unto Israel of old, so He was made full provision to meet our every need. They had the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night to direct their course; and we have the Word of God as a “lamp unto [our] feet” (Psa 119:105), and the Holy Spirit to interpret it to us. As God furnished them with manna from on high, so He has given us “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4) to feed upon. As He caused water to flow from the smitten rock for Israel, so He now revives the souls of the contrite. As He enabled them to overcome Amalek, so His grace is sufficient for us.

That remarkable feature of the Old Testament Scriptures which we are now dealing with is a very comprehensive one, and a large volume might readily be written thereon. The whole of the Mosaic ritual possessed a typical and spiritual significance. The tabernacle in which they worshipped was an emblematic representation of Christ and His Church; and by ordaining that, more than a dozen chapters should be devoted to an account of its structure, its furniture, and its setting up; while but a single one describes the creating and peopling of this earth, tells us that in the divine estimation, the latter is of infinitely more importance than the former. The world was made for Christ (Col 1:16) and His people (2Co 4:15), as a platform upon which unto the celestial hierarchies “might be known by [or rather ‘through’—*dia*] the church the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10). The tabernacle was God’s dwelling-place in the midst of Israel. Its holy courts, its sacred vessels, the priesthood which ministered there, the sacrifices they offered, were, to their minutest detail, all so many object lessons brought down to our finite capacity, setting forth the grand truths of divine revelation, without which we could not so fully understand what is set forth in the New Testament.

Many of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament adumbrated Christ in the varied relations He sustained. Adam presaged His federal headship (Rom 5:14); Moses, His prophetic office (Deu 18:18); Melchizedek, His priestly (Psa 110:4); David, His kingly (Rev 5:5). The chequered experiences through which Joseph passed foreshadowed Christ both in His humiliation and His exaltation. Joshua typified Him as the Securer of the inheritance. The miraculous birth of Isaac prefigured the supernatural incarnation; the murder of Abel, the death of Christ; the budding of Aaron’s rod, His resurrection. Every perfection of Christ’s character, each office that He sustained, all the aspects of His redemptive work—Godwards, manwards, and sinward—were indicated by or through one and another of the historical persons of the patriarchal and Mosaic eras. That so very much in the Jewish Scriptures should be adapted to image the person and history of the Saviour cannot be accounted for by any other hypothesis than that God Himself is the Author of them. The spiritual instruction conveyed by the Old Testament narratives, their deeper and hidden meanings, the great number and variety of the types, their anticipations of and perfect accord with what is taught in the New Testament, clearly demonstrate that Judaism and Christianity—so dissimilar in their externals, so opposite in their incidentals, yet uniting in their essentials—both belong to the same Lord.

