

Volume 16—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 5**MAY, 1937****THE SPIRIT CONFIRMING**

In view of the preceding articles on the Spirit *preserving*, there was really no need for us to take up another aspect of the subject which so closely approximates thereto; yet a little reflection has persuaded us that it may be wise to do so. Some of our readers are fearful that the editor wavers on the blessed truth of the eternal security of the Christian. Some Arminians because of our strong emphasis upon the absolute supremacy and sovereignty of God and the total impotency of fallen men unto holiness, have charged us with denying human responsibility, when the fact is that we go much farther than they do in the holding and proclaiming of man's accountability. On the other hand, some Calvinists, because we insist so emphatically and frequently on the imperative necessity of treading the Highway of Holiness in order to escape the everlasting burnings, have questioned our soundness on the final perseverance of the saints; when probably, as our article on Suicide shows, we believe this truth *more fully* than they do. Very few today hold the balance of the Truth.

That which we now desire to contemplate is the blessed Spirit viewed under the metaphor of an "*earnest*." This term is used of Him in the following passages: "Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts" (2 Cor. 1:22); "Now He that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit" (2 Cor. 5:5); "After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of His glory" (Eph. 1:13, 14). The figure is taken from an ancient custom (which is by no means obsolete today) of the method used in the clinching of a commercial bargain or compact. The seller agrees to make delivery at some future date of what has been agreed upon, and as a *guaranty of* this the purchaser receives an "earnest," that is, a sample or token, an insignificant installment, of what has been contracted for.

An "earnest," then, *supposes a compact* wherein two parties are agreed, the one who is ultimately to come into possession of what has been agreed upon being given a token of the other's good faith that he will abide by the terms of the bargain. It is a part of the price given beforehand, to assure the one to whom the "earnest" is given that at the appointed season he shall receive the whole of that which is promised. Now the right which the believer has to eternal life and glory comes in a way of *compact* or covenant. On the one side, the believer agrees to the terms specified (the forsaking of sin and the serving of the Lord), and yields himself to God by repentance and faith. On the other side, God binds Himself to give the believer forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith. This is clearly enough stated in "Incline your ear, and come unto Me: hear, and your soul shall live; *and* I will (then) make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3)—upon our hearty consent to the terms of the Gospel, God engages Himself to bestow upon us those inestimable blessings secured for His people by the spiritual or antitypical David.

An "earnest" *intimates there is some delay* before the thing bargained for is actually bestowed: in the case of goods, deliverance at once is not agreed upon, in the case of property possession is not immediately entered into. It is for this reason that the token of good faith or preliminary installment is given: because the promised deliverance is de-

ferred, possession being delayed for a season, an “earnest” is bestowed as a pledge or confirmation of what is to follow. Now as soon as the believer really enters into covenant with God, he has a right to the everlasting inheritance, but his actual entrance into full blessedness is deferred. God does not remove us to Heaven the moment we believe, any more than He brought Israel into Canaan within a few days after delivering them from Egypt. Instead, we are left for a while in this world, and that for various reasons: one among them being, that we may have opportunities for exercising faith and love; faith in “*looking for* that blessed hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13), hope in *longing*: “ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *waiting for* the adoption” (Rom. 8:23).

An “earnest” is *a part*, though only a very small one, *of the whole* that has been agreed upon. If a contract was made for the delivery of a sum of money on a certain date, then a trifling installment thereof was given; if it were the transfer of a piece of land, then a square of turf was cut and handed to its future possessor, that being a symbolic guarantee to assure him during the interval of waiting. So too, those comforts which the Spirit communicates to believers are the same in kind as the joys of Heaven though they are vastly inferior in their degree. The saving gifts and graces of the Spirit are but a small beginning and part of that glory which shall yet be revealed in and to us. Grace is glory begun, and they differ from each other only as an infant does from a fully matured adult. Holiness or purity of heart is a pledge of that sinless estate and full conformity to Christ which is promised the Christian in the future. That present loosing of our bonds, is but a sample of our perfect and final freedom.

An “earnest” is given *for the security* of the party who receives it, and not for the benefit of him that bestows it. He who gives the earnest is legally bound to complete his bargain, but the recipient has this guarantee in hand for the confirming and comforting of his mind while he is waiting, it being to him a tangible pledge and sample of what as yet is only promised. Here again we may see the aptness and accuracy of the figure, for the spiritual earnest which Christians receive is given solely for *their benefit*, for there is no danger whatever of backing out on God’s part. “Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, *we might have a strong consolation*, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb. 6:17, 18)—and this because believers commonly are assailed by many doubts and fears.—A.W.P.

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

113: *The Christian's Altar*: 13:10.

There is a saying that "a man usually finds what he is looking for," and there is a sense in which that principle holds good of not a little consulting of the Scriptures. Various kinds of people approach the Scriptures with the object of finding something in them which will countenance their ideas, and no matter how foolish and far-fetched those ideas may be, they generally succeed in locating that which with some degree of plausibility supports them—that is why the scoffer will often counter a quotation from God's Word with "O you can prove anything from the Bible." It matters not to those who are determined to procure "proof" for their vagaries, that they "*wrest*" the Scriptures (2 Peter 3:16) either by detaching a sentence from its context and giving it a meaning quite contrary to its setting, or by interpreting literally that which is figurative, or giving a figurative meaning to that which is literal.

Not only does practically every professedly Christian sect make a show of producing Scriptural warrant for its peculiar beliefs and practices, so that Universalists, Annihilationists, Seventh-day Adventists, quote a list of texts in proof of their errors, but others who do not claim to be "Christian" appeal to the Bible in support of their delusions. It would probably surprise some of our readers did they know how artfully (but wickedly) Spiritists juggle with Holy Writ, appearing to adduce not a little in favour of clairvoyance, clairaudience, trance-speaking, etc., while Theosophists have the gall to say that reincarnation is plainly taught in the Bible; all of which goes to show how fearfully fallen man may abuse God's mercies and profane that which is most sacred.

Nor are Romanists any exception. It is commonly supposed that they have very little concern for Scripture, buttressing their superstitions by an appeal to tradition and ancient customs. It is true that the rank and file of the Papists are deprived of the Scriptures, and are satisfied with "the authority of the church," as sufficient justification for all they believe and do, but it is a big mistake to suppose that her officers are incapable of making a Scriptural defence of their positions. The writer of this article discovered that more than a quarter of a century ago, in his first pastorate. Situated in a mining-camp in Colorado, the only other "minister" in the country was a Romish priest, with whom we got acquainted. He volunteered to give us Scripture for every Popish dogma and practice, and when we put him to the test (as we did, again and again), were amazed and awed by the subtle manner in which he mis-"appropriated" the Word. It was then we learned the uselessness of "arguing" about Divine things.

The above thoughts have been suggested by the opening words of our present passage: "We have *an* altar" (Heb. 13:10). Most fearfully has this clause been perverted by those who have given it a meaning and put it to a use wholly foreign to the design of the Spirit in the passage from which it is taken. Deceived by the mere sound of words, the affirmation has been boldly made that not only did the Israelites in Old Testament times have a literal and material altar, but that "we," Christians, also "have," by Divine appointment, "an altar" that is, a material one of wood and stone, and hence the "altar" and "high altar" in many "Protestant churches." But an altar calls for a *sacrifice*, and hence the invention of "the mass" or "unbloody sacrifice of the flesh and blood of Christ" offered by the priests. Many who do not go this far, insist that the table used for the celebration of the Lord's supper should be designated an "altar," and suppose that our text authorises them therein.

That such a conception as the one we have just mentioned is utterly groundless and erroneous may quickly be demonstrated. In the first place, whatever be signified by the “altar” in our passage, it is manifestly opposed to, set in contrast from, the visible and material altar of Judaism, so much so that they who officiated at the latter were debarred from feasting on the former. In the second place, the Jewish altar, like everything else in the tabernacle, was a shadow or type, and surely it would be placing a severe strain upon the imagination to conclude that the brazen altar of old was but a figure of a table now used in our “churches”! Third, sufficient has been advanced by the Apostle in the preceding chapters to make it unmistakably plain that Christ Himself—in His Person, office, and sacrificial work—is the antitype and substance of all the tabernacle types! Finally, the Spirit Himself has made it quite clear that our “altar” is a *spiritual* one, and that the “sacrifice” we are to offer thereon is a *spiritual* one: see verse 15.

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle” (v. 10). In seeking to ascertain the meaning of this verse, which has needlessly perplexed and been made the occasion of much profitless controversy, it will greatly simplify the expositor’s task if he bears in mind that the primary aim of the Spirit throughout this Epistle is to set forth the transcendent excellency of Christ over all persons through whom God had, in times past, spoken unto men, and in the vast superiority of His office and work over all the institutions which had foreshadowed them under the old covenant. As the incarnate Son, He is infinitely above all prophets and angels (chapters 1 and 2). Moses, “the servant *in* the house of God” retires before the presence of Christ “the Son *over* His own house” (chapter 3). So in regard to all the Mosaic institutions: *Christ* fulfills everything which they prefigured,

This is quite an elementary truth, yet is it one of basic importance, for error at this point produces most pernicious and fatal consequences. The entire system of worship that Jehovah appointed for Israel was of a typical character, and the reality and substance of it all is now found in Christ. *He* is “the great High Priest” of whom the priests under the law, Aaron himself not excepted, were but faint adumbrations. His very body is “a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands” (9:11). *His* was the sacrifice which fully and forever accomplished that which all the Levitical offerings proclaimed as necessary to redemption, but the repetition of which clearly testified they had never effected. In like manner, Christ is the grand *Antitype* of all the sacred vessels of the tabernacle: He is the true Brazen-altar, Laver, Golden-altar of incense, Candlestick, Table of shewbread, Mercy Seat, and Ark of the Covenant.

That the Lord Jesus *is* Himself the antitype of “the altar of burnt offering” appears by comparing two of His own declarations: “Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?” (Matt. 23:19); “And for their sakes I *sanctify Myself*” (John 17:19). Both “the altar that sanctifieth the gift” and “the gift” itself *meet in* Him—just as both the officiating priest and the sacrifice which he offered find their fulfillment in Him. It seems strange that some able writers have quite missed the point of Matthew 23:19 when dealing with its fulfillment and realization in the Lord Jesus. They have made “the altar” to be the wooden cross to which the Saviour was nailed, and that mistake has laid the foundation for a more serious error. No, “the altar” on which “the gift” was laid pointed to the Divine dignity of Christ’s glorious *Person*, and it was that which gave infinite worth to His sacrifice. It was for this very reason the Spirit dwelt at

such length upon the unique glory of Christ's Person in the earlier chapters of this Epistle, *before* He opened to us His sacrificial work.

What has just been pointed out above supplies the key to many a lovely Old Testament type. For instance, we are told that "Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar" (Gen. 8:20). Very blessed is that. The *first* act of Noah as he came forth from the ark onto the purified earth was not to build a house for himself, but to erect that which spoke of the Person of Christ—for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. On that altar Noah expressed his thanksgiving by presenting his burnt offerings, teaching us that it is only by Christ we can acceptably present to God our sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). And we are told that Noah's offering was "a sweet savour unto the Lord," and then we read "and God *blessed* Noah and his sons (Gen. 9:1), for all blessing comes to us through Christ.

"And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the LORD, who appeared unto him" (Gen. 12:7). That was equally blessed. This was the *first* act of Abraham after he had left Chaldea, and then Haran where his progress had been delayed for a season, and had now actually entered Canaan. The Lord appeared to him here, as He had first done in Ur, and made promise of the land unto him and his seed; and his response was to set up an altar. And again we read "and he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent between Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east; and there he builded an altar unto the LORD" (Gen. 12:8). How significant! Bethel means "the house of God," while Hai signifies "a heap of ruins." It was *between them* that Abram pitched his tent—emblematic of the pilgrim character of the saint while in this world, and erected his altar—symbol of his dependence upon and worship of God. It was to this same altar he returned after his failure in going down into Egypt: Genesis 13:3, 4.

Of Isaac we read, "And he builded an altar there, and called upon the name of the LORD" (Gen. 26:25). How beautifully that brings out another aspect of our type: here the "altar" is the place of prayer, for it is only in the name of Christ—the antitype of the altar—that we can present our petitions acceptably to God. Of Jacob we read, "And he erected there an altar, and called it Elelohe-Israel (God, the God of Israel)" (Gen. 33:20). That was immediately after his Divine deliverance from Esau and his four hundred men—intimating that it is in and by Christ the believer is eternally *secure*. Of Moses we read, that he "built an altar, and called the name of it Jehovahnissi (The-LORD-Is-My-Banner)" (Exo. 17:15). That was after Israel's victory over the Amalekites—denoting that it is only by Christ that believers *can overcome* their spiritual enemies. "And Moses wrote all the words of the LORD, and rose up early in the morning, and builded an altar under the hill" (Exo. 24:4)—only by Christ is the Law magnified and honoured.

But it is more especially upon the brazen altar in the tabernacle that our attention needs to be concentrated. A description of it is supplied in Exodus 27:1-8, though other passages should be carefully compared. This altar occupied a place of first importance among the seven pieces of the furniture in the tabernacle, for it was not only the largest of them all—being almost big enough to hold the others—but it was placed "before the door" (Exo. 40:6), just inside the outer court (Exo. 40:33), and would thus be the first object to meet the eye of the worshipper as he entered the sacred precincts. It was made of wood, but overlaid with brass, so that it could withstand the action of fire, which was burning continually upon it (Lev. 6:13). To it the sinner came with his Divinely-

appointed sacrifice, wherein the innocent was slain in the place of the guilty. At this altar the high priest officiated on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16).

The brazen altar was the way of approach to God, for it was there that the Lord promised to meet with His people: “*There I will meet with the children of Israel*” (Exo. 29:43): how that reminds us of the Saviour’s declaration “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me” (John 14:6)! This altar was really the basis of the whole Levitical system, for on it the burnt offering, meal offering, peace offering, and sin offering were presented to God. Blood was put upon its horns, sprinkled upon it, round about it, and poured out at its base. It was the chief connecting-link between the people and Jehovah, they being so identified with it that certain parts of the offerings there presented to Him were eaten by them, and hence we read “Behold Israel after the flesh: are not they which eat of the sacrifices *partakers* of the altar” (1 Cor. 10:18).

This was an altar for all Israel—and for none else!—and their jealousy was promptly stirred if anything seemed to interfere with it. A striking illustration of this is found in Joshua 22. There we read that the two and a half tribes whose inheritance lay on the far side of Jordan erected an altar—“a great altar to see to” (v. 10). When the other tribes heard of this, they were greatly alarmed and severely censured them, for it appeared to deny the unity of the Nation and to be a rival unto the altar for all the people. They were only satisfied when the Reubenites assured them that they had *not* built this altar by the Jordan to offer sacrifices thereon, but for a *witness* (v. 27), declaring, “God forbid that we should rebel against the LORD, and turn this day from following the LORD, to build an altar for burnt offerings, for meat offerings, or for sacrifices, besides the altar of the LORD our God that is before His tabernacle” (v. 29).

We may see again the prominent place which was given to the altar by Israel in the days of Ezra, for when they returned from the captivity, it was the *first* thing they set up—thus signifying they could not approach God or be connected with Him on any other ground. “Then stood up Jeshua (Joshua) the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon, as it is written in the law of Moses the man of God” (Ezra. 3:2).

In view of its significance, its importance, its hallowed associations, one can readily imagine what it meant to a converted Jew to abandon the altar of Judaism. Unto his unbelieving brethren he would necessarily appear as a renegade of his fathers, an apostate from God, and a fool to himself. Their taunt would be, In turning your back upon Judaism you have lost everything: you have *no* altar! Why, you are worse off than the wretched Samaritans, for they *do* have a place and system of worship on mount Gerizim: whereas you Christians have *nothing!* But here the Apostle turns the tables upon them: he affirms that not only do we “*have* an altar,” but it was one which those who still identified themselves with the temple and its services had no right to. In turning from Judaism to Christ the believing Hebrew had left the shadow for the substance, the figure for the reality; whereas those who despised and rejected Christ merely had that which was become “weak and beggarly elements” (Gal. 4:9).

The sad failure of the great mass of the Jews, under the Gospel-preaching of the Apostles, to turn their affections unto things above, where Christ had passed within the veil, and their stubbornness in clinging to the tangible system at Jerusalem, was something more than a peculiarity of that nation—it exemplified the universal fondness of man for

that which is material in religion, and his disrelish of that which is strictly *spiritual*. In Judaism there was much that was addressed to the senses, herein too lies the power and secret of Rome's success: the strength of its appeal to the natural man lies in its sensuous show. Though Christians have no visible manifestation of the Divine glory on earth to which they may draw near when they worship, they do have access to the Throne of Grace in Heaven; but it is only the truly regenerate who prefer the substance to the shadow.

"We have an altar." Our altar, unlike that of Judaism's, is inside the veil: "whither the Forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus" (Heb. 6:20), after that He had appeared here upon earth to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. To the Christian comes the blessed exhortation, "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; and having an High Priest, over the house of God; let *us* draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith" (Heb. 10:19-22). What a marvel of mercy, what a wonder of grace that poor fallen sinners, through faith in Christ's blood, may come into the presence of God without a fear! On the ground of Christ's infinite merits, such are *welcome* there. The presence of Christ on High is the proof that our sins have been put away, and in the joyous consciousness thereof we may approach God as worshippers.

But the special aspect in which our text sets forth Christ as "the altar" of His people, is to present Him as the One who furnishes them with that *spiritual* meat which is needed for nourishment and sustenance in their worship and service. The Apostle had just said, "Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with *grace*; not with *meats*, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein" (Heb. 13:9), and when he now adds "we have an altar," his obvious meaning is: we have in Christ the true altar, which supplies us with "grace," that better food which really establishes the heart before God. In other words, the Holy Spirit here explains and declares the fulfillment of those words of Christ's "My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed: he that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, dwelleth in Me, and I in him" (John 6:55, 56);

Let us now consider our verse a little closer in the light of its immediate context: that there *is* an intimate connection between them is obvious, for in verse 9 the Apostle had spoken of "meats" and here he still refers to "eating"! Of the one he had affirmed they "profited not," concerning the latter he mentions those who have "no right" thereto. Over against the "meats which profited not" he had set that "grace" which establishes the heart, and now he contrasts "the altar" from the defunct figures of Judaism. As we have shown in last month's article, to have the heart "established with grace" signifies two things: first, to be so weaned from self-righteousness and creature dependence as to clearly apprehend that salvation from start to finish is of the unmerited and unconditional favour of God; second, to have the Spirit so shine upon His work within that as we diligently examine the same and carefully compare it with the experience of saints as described in the Scriptures, we may be definitely assured that we are born of God.

Having affirmed the vast superiority of the heart being established with grace over being occupied with "meats"—which expression referred directly to the Mosaic distinctions between clean and unclean articles of diet, but in its wider signification was a part put for the whole ceremonial system—the Apostle now declares that the Christian is provided

with far more excellent food for the soul. The striking force of this is only apparent by a careful study of the Levitical types and by closely following the Apostle's argument in the verses which immediately succeed our text. The Jewish altar had not only typed out Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice to God for the sins of His people, but it had also foreshadowed Him as *the life-sustenance* of the true worshippers of God. How remarkably full were the Old Testament types, and how much we lose by ignoring the same and confining our reading to the New Testament—no wonder so much in Hebrews seems to be obscure and of little interest to the Gentile.

Of many of the offerings which were laid on the tabernacle altar only parts of them were consumed by the fire the remaining portions being reserved *as food* for the priests, or for the offerer and his friends—this food being regarded as particularly sacred, and the eating of it as a great religious privilege. For instance, we read, "This is the law of the meat offering: the sons of Aaron shall offer it before the LORD, before the altar. And he shall take of it his handful, of the flour of the meat offering, and of the oil thereof, and all the frankincense which is upon the meat offering, and shall burn it upon the altar for a sweet savour, the memorial of it, unto the LORD. And *the remainder* thereof shall Aaron and his sons eat: with unleavened bread shall it be eaten in the holy place" (Lev. 6:14-16). "This is the law of the trespass offering: it is most holy . . . Every male among the priests shall eat thereof . . . And the flesh of the sacrifice of his peace offerings for thanksgiving shall be eaten the same day that it is offered" (Lev. 7:1, 6, 15). "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Behold, I also have given thee the charge of Mine heave offerings . . . In the most holy place shalt thou eat it: every male shall eat it; it shall be holy unto thee" (Num. 18:8, 10).

But the Christian has spiritual food far more holy and precious than any Israelite ever had, or even Aaron the high priest was permitted to taste. *Christ* is our food, the "Bread of life" to our souls. He is not only our sacrifice but our sustenance; He has not only propitiated God, but He is the nourishment of His people. It is true that we should by faith, feed upon Him when remembering His death in the way appointed, yet there is no reference in our text to "the Lord's supper," nor is "the Lord's table" ever called an "altar" in Scripture. Moreover it is our blessed privilege to feed upon Christ not only at "Communion seasons," but constantly. And herein appears again the immeasurable superiority of Christianity over Judaism. Israel according to the flesh partook only of the symbols, whereas we have the Reality. They had only certain parts of the offerings—as it were the crumbs from God's table; whereas we feed with Him on the fatted calf itself. They ate of the sacrifices only occasionally, whereas Christ is our daily food.

"We have an altar," namely, Christ, and He is the only altar which *God owns*, and the only one which must be recognised by us. For almost nineteen centuries—since God employed the Romans to destroy Jerusalem—the Jews have been without an altar, and are so to this day. For Romanists to *invent* an altar, and make it both the foundation and centre of their entire idolatrous system, is the height of presumption, and a fearful insult to Christ and the sufficiency of His sacrifice. If those "which serve the tabernacle"—they who continued officiating at Jerusalem in the days when the Apostle wrote this Epistle—had "no right" to "eat" of the Christian's altar, that is, enjoy and derive benefit from the Person and sacrifice of Christ, then, how much less have the pope and his satellites any title to the benefits of Christ while they so wickedly usurp His place and prerogative. That the Lord Jesus Himself *is* our "altar" as well as interceding High Priest also appears

from, “Another angel (Christ as ‘the Angel of the Covenant’) came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne” (Rev. 8:3)!—A.W.P.

THE LIFE OF DAVID.

65. *His misjudging Mephibosheth.*

“It is human to err.” True, yet that does not excuse it, especially where a fellow-mortal is unjustly condemned by us. Appearances are proverbially deceptive: we need to get beneath the surface in order to form a right estimate. Gossip is never to be credited, in fact should not be heeded at all. Only from the mouths of two or more reliable witnesses is an accusation against another to be given a hearing. Even then there must be a fair trial accorded, so that the one accused may know what he is charged with, and have opportunity to defend himself and refute the charge. Only arrant cowards stab in the back or under the cover of darkness. A safe rule to be guided by is never to say anything behind a person’s back which you would be afraid to say and are not prepared to substantiate before his face. Alas, how commonly is that rule violated in this evil day! How ready people are to imagine and believe the worst, rather than the best of others—few have escaped this infection.

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). The setting of those words is worthy of note. The Lord Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath day, and His enemies—ever seeking some pretext to condemn Him—were angry. He had flagrantly disregarded their dicta: He had acted at complete variance with *their* ideas of how the Sabbath should be kept holy. Therefore they at once jumped to the harsh conclusion that the Redeemer had desecrated the Sabbath. Christ pointed out that their verdict was both an arbitrary and superficial one. Circumstances alter cases: as the circumcising of a child on the Sabbath, if that were the eighth day from its birth, showed (v. 23). It is the motive which largely determines the value of an act, and it is sinful to guess at the motives of others. Moreover, the reign of law must not be suffered to freeze the milk of human kindness in our veins, nor make us impervious to human suffering.

“Judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment” (John 7:24). Is not this a word which is much needed today by both writer and reader? There is a twofold danger to be guarded against. First, to form too favourable a judgment of people, particularly of those who profess to be Christians. Words are cheap, and gushiness is never a mark of reality. That a man calls himself a Christian, and sincerely thinks himself to be so, does not make him one. The fact that he is a great reader of the Bible, a regular attendee of religious services, and is sound in his morals, is no proof that he has been born again. “Lay hands suddenly on no man” (1 Tim. 5:22): look for the marks of regeneration and be satisfied you have found them, before you address any one as a Brother or Sister in Christ. It is our own fault if we are imposed upon by wolves in sheep’s clothing.

On the other hand, there is just as real a danger of forming too harsh a judgment of people, and imputing to hypocrisy what is genuine. A man is not to be made an offender for a word, nor does he deserve to be snubbed because he fails to fawn upon and flatter you. We must not expect everybody to pronounce *our* shibboleths or see eye to eye with us in everything. A kindly heart often beats beneath a gruff exterior. A babbling brook is very shallow, but still waters run deep. Not all are endowed with five talents. Others may not have had the same opportunities and privileges you have enjoyed. Let not a single action alienate a friend: bear in mind the general tenor of his conduct towards you. Be as ready to forgive as you desire to be forgiven. Remember there is still much in you which grates upon others. When wronged *pray over it* before you pass a verdict. Many a person

has afterwards bitterly regretted a hasty decision. Take *all* the circumstances into account and “judge not according to the appearance, but judge righteous judgment.”

We have begun this article thus because the passage we are about to consider (2 Sam. 16:1-4) shows us David grievously misjudging one who was affectionately attached to him. David was unwarrantably influenced by “appearances.” He gave ear to an unconfirmed slander against an absent one. He at once believed the worst, without affording the accused any opportunity to vindicate himself. It was one to whom David had shown much kindness in the past, and now that a servant brought to him an evil report, the king accepted the same, concluding that the master had turned traitor. It is true that human nature is lamentably fickle, and that kindness is often rewarded with the basest of ingratitude; yet all are not unthankful and treacherous. We must not allow the wickedness of some to prejudice us against all. We should deal impartially and judge righteously of everyone alike: yet only Divine grace—humbly and earnestly sought—will enable us to remain just and merciful after we have been deceived and wronged a few times.

Later, David discovered that he had been deceived (2 Sam. 19:24-30) and was obliged to reverse his harsh verdict; but this did not alter the fact that he had grievously misjudged Mephibosheth and had harboured unjust prejudices against him. And this incident, like many another narrated in Holy Writ, is recorded, my reader, for *our* learning and warning. We are prone to misjudge even our friends, and because of this, are in danger of crediting false reports about them. But there is no reason why we should be deceived, either for or against another: “He that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1 Cor. 2:15 margin). Ah, *there* is the seat of our trouble: it is because we are so unspiritual that we so often judge according to the appearance, and not righteous judgment. A jaundiced eye is incapable of seeing things in their true colours. When the regenerate walk after the flesh, they are just as liable to be imposed upon as are the unregenerate. And this, as we shall see, was the cause of David’s sad error.

“And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him” (2 Sam. 16:1). The topographical reference connects with 15:30 and 32. On leaving Jerusalem David and his little band had crossed the Kidron, and ascended Olivet. They were making for Bahurim (v. 5), which was a low-lying village in the descent from Olivet to the Jordan. Ultimately, they pitched camp at Mahanaim, on the far side of the Jordan (17:24). Thus it will be seen that they were passing through that portion of the land which was allotted to the tribe of Benjamin (see Josh. 18:11-28), which was the territory of Saul’s tribe, and *that* was surely dangerous ground for him to tread! This is the first point for us to carefully weigh, for it is one of the keys which opens to us the inner significance of our present incident.

There is nothing meaningless in God’s Word, even the geographical details often contain deeply important instruction, pointing valuable spiritual lessons, if only we take the trouble to search them out. This is what we have to do here, for the Holy Spirit has given us no direct hint that the direction which David was now taking furnishes a clue to his subsequent conduct. In making for the territory of Saul’s tribe, David was (typically) entering upon *the Enemy’s* ground—should the reader deem this a rather far-fetched conclusion on our part, we would ask him to note that in the verse which immediately follows our present passage, we are plainly told that there came out “a man of the family of the house of *Saul* . . . and *cursed*” David! Surely that was the Devil as a “roaring lion” raging against him. Now to come onto the Enemy’s ground, my reader, is to give him an

“advantage of us” (2 Cor. 2:11), and that is to come under his power; and when under his power our judgment is blinded, and we are quite incapable of judging righteously.

But there is another little detail here, a confirmatory one, which is necessary for us to observe, if we are to view this incident in its true perspective. Our passage opens with the word “And,” and common-place and trivial as that may appear, yet it is a vital link in the chain of thought we are now endeavouring to follow out. That “And” tells us we must *connect* what is recorded at the beginning of chapter 16 with that which is narrated at the close of 15. And there, as we saw in last month’s article, David was guilty of dishonest subterfuge, counseling the priests to feign themselves the faithful servants of Absalom, when in reality they were David’s spies. Therein the king was manifestly acting in the energy of *the flesh*, seeking by his own carnal efforts to “defeat the counsel of Ahithophel” (2 Sam. 15:34), instead of leaving it with the Lord to answer his prayer to that end (15:31).

Here, then, is vitally important practical teaching for you and me, dear reader. If we are not to be misguided by superficial appearances and are to judge “righteous judgment,” then we must *avoid* these mistakes that David made. The two small details we have dwelt upon above, explain why he so grievously misjudged Mephibosheth. If, then, we are to have clear discernment, which will preserve us from being deceived by glib-tongued imposters and taken in by apparent acts of kindness toward us, we must walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh, and tread the paths of righteousness and not get onto the Enemy’s territory. “He that is spiritual discerneth all things” (1 Cor. 2:15): yes, the “spiritual,” and not the carnal. As we have said above, it is our *own* fault if we form a wrong judgment of others—due to making the mistakes David did. “If therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light” (Matt. 6:22).

“And when David was a little past the top of the hill, behold, Ziba the servant of Mephibosheth met him, with a couple of asses saddled, and upon them two hundred loaves of bread, and an hundred bunches of raisins, and an hundred of summer fruits, and a bottle of wine” (2 Sam. 16:1). Those who have not followed us throughout this series of articles should turn to 2 Samuel 9, where not a little is recorded of these two men. Mephibosheth was the grandson of Saul, the arch-enemy of David, yet to him David showed great kindness because he was the son of Jonathan (2 Sam. 4:4), with whom David had made a covenant that he would not cut off his kindness to his house forever (1 Sam. 20:11-17). In 2 Samuel 9 we read, “The king called to Ziba, Saul’s servant, and said unto him, I have given unto thy master’s son all that pertained to Saul and to all his house. Thou therefore, and thy sons, and thy servants, shall till the land for him, and thou shalt bring in the fruits, that thy master’s son may have food to eat: but Mephibosheth thy master’s son shall eat bread always at my table. Now Ziba had fifteen sons and twenty servants” (vv. 9, 10).

Ziba, then, was a man of some importance, for he had twenty servants, yet both they and his sons were commanded to serve Mephibosheth. This it is which explains his conduct in our present incident: Ziba was not content to be manager of the considerable estate of Mephibosheth, but coveted to be master of it; and covetousness is ever the mother of a brood of other sins. It was so here: so carried away was he by his evil lust, Ziba scorned not to resort to the basest treachery. He concluded that now was a favourable opportunity for furthering his base design. Having laid his plans with serpentine cunning, he put them into execution, and apparently with success. But “The triumphing of the wicked

is short, and the joy of the hypocrite but for a moment” (Job 20:5), and so it proved in this case.

Ziba was determined to procure from David a royal grant of his master’s estate, and then, whether David or Absalom prevailed in the present conflict, his desire would be secured. To obtain that grant two things were necessary: first, Ziba himself must obtain favour in the king’s eyes; and second, Mephibosheth must be brought into decided disfavour. The opening verse shows the measure Ziba took to accomplish the first. He met the fugitive king and his band with an elaborate present: it was well timed and appropriately selected. Ziba posed as one who was not only loyal to David’s cause, but as very solicitous of his welfare and comfort. But as Thomas Scott says, “Selfish men are often very generous in giving away the property of others for their own advantage.” Looking at this detail from the Divine side of things, we may see here the mercy of God in providing for His own, as He ever does—even though He employs the *ravens* to feed them!

“And the king said unto Ziba, What meanest thou by these?” (2 Sam. 16:2). David was habitually cautious, and at this critical juncture he had need to be doubly so. His own spoilt son had risen up against him, securing a large following, and when such an one as Ahithophel had gone over to his side, the king knew not whom he could trust. Yet, while this sad situation warranted the utmost caution, it certainly did not justify a readiness to believe the worst of everybody—there is a happy medium between losing all confidence in human nature, and having such a blind trust in men that any charlatan may impose upon us. David did not, then, immediately accept Ziba’s present but issued this challenge: was it a subtle trap, or the liberality of a generous man kindly disposed toward him?

“And Ziba said, The asses be for the king’s household to ride on; and the bread and summer fruit for the young men to eat; and the wine, that such as be faint in the wilderness may drink” (v. 2). This was the means used by this wretched Ziba to ingratiate himself with David: “A man’s gift maketh room for him, and bringeth him before great men” (Prov. 18:16). Rightly did Matthew Henry ask, “Shall the prospect of advantage in the world, make men generous to be *rich*; and shall not the belief of an abundant recompense in the resurrection of the just, make us charitable to the *poor*?” Surely *that* is the practical lesson for us in this verse: “And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations” (Luke 16:9).

“And the king said, And where is thy master’s son? And Ziba said unto the king, Behold, he abideth at Jerusalem: for he said, Today shall the house of Israel restore me the kingdom of my father” (2 Sam. 16:3). Having wormed himself into the king’s heart—for being so largely swayed by his emotions, David was peculiarly susceptible to kindness—Ziba now undertook to blacken the character of his master and turn David utterly against him. He represents Mephibosheth as ungrateful, treacherous, and covetous. How often masters and mistresses suffer unjustly from the lies of their servants! “A wicked man taketh a gift put of the bosom to pervert the ways of judgment” (Prov. 17:23). “It is true indeed that David did not *know* that Ziba was wicked. His unexpected kindness came at a time when almost every other hand was either paralysed by terror, or else armed against him in active enmity. No doubt at such a moment, it required great self-possession to pause, and to withhold the tongue from rashly pronouncing judgment. But David was a king, and it behoved him to be wisely cautious” (B. W. Newton).

“Then said the king to Ziba, Behold, thine are all that pertained unto Mephibosheth” (2 Sam. 16:4). David credited the foul calumny and without further inquiry or consideration condemns Mephibosheth, seizes his lands as forfeited, and makes a grant of them to his servant. What a solemn warning is this for us! What pains we should take to confirm what we hear, and thus arrive at the real truth of things. As an old writer quaintly said, “God has given us *two* ears that we may hear *both* sides.” But sooner or later the truth *will* come to light, as it did in this case. When at last David returned in triumph to Jerusalem, Mephibosheth met him and had opportunity to vindicate himself. How bitterly must the king have then regretted his hasty verdict and the cruel wrong he had done him by crediting such vile reports against him!

“And Ziba said, I humbly beseech thee that I may find grace in thy sight my lord, O king” (v. 4). Yes, words are cheap, and backbiters are generally flatterers. But note well that Ziba *did not accompany* the fugitive king! No, he thought too much of his own skin for that, and was determined to be on the safe side, no matter what should be the outcome of Absalom’s rebellion. “Anxious apparently lest he should suffer if Absalom were to succeed, he seems to have retired to Shimei and the Benjamites, to secure his interests with them; for he was found, when the king returned, in the train of Shimei—that same Shimei who had cursed David” (B. W. Newton). Thus, when David arrived back again in Jerusalem, Ziba was in the ranks of the king’s enemies!—whereas Mephibosheth was among his most loyal subjects.—A.W.P.

THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

5. *The Siniatic.*

Continuing our survey of the *typical teachings* of the Mosaic economy as they anticipated and prepared the way for the establishing of Christianity, we note, fourth, the *corporate character of Israel*. This was a distinct line in the typical picture, and a feature in marked advance of anything that had preceded. Under the previous covenants God treated only with particular persons, and throughout the history associated therewith everything was peculiarly individualistic. But at Sinai the Lord established a formal bond between Himself and the favoured Nation. It was then, for the first time, that we see the people of God in an *organized* condition. It is true that they were divided into twelve separate tribes, yet their union before God was most blessedly evidenced when the high priest, as the representative of the whole nation, ministered before Jehovah in the holy place with their names inscribed on his breastplate.

Israel in their national capacity was a people set apart from all others, and the degree in which they fulfilled the end of their separation foreshadowed the Church of God, the true kingdom over which the Messiah presides. Vain indeed is the claim of any church or collection of churches, any party or "assemblies," that *it* or *they* are either the antitype or the "representation" of the true Church, though this arrogant pretension is by no means confined to the Roman hierarchy. The purest churches on earth are but most imperfect shadows of that true kingdom wherein dwelleth righteousness. "The true antitype is the 'Church of the Firstborn which are written in Heaven' (Heb. 12:23)—that willing and chosen people, the spiritual seed of Abraham, of whom Christ is the Head, in whose character the Law will be perfectly transcribed, and who will be all righteous, not in profession merely, but in fact" (John Kelly).

That Church will only be revealed in its corporate character or collective capacity when Christ comes the second time "without sin unto salvation," to conduct them to that inheritance which He hath prepared for them from the foundation of the world. Yet it is in the New Testament, in those Scriptures which more especially pertain to the Christian dispensation, that we find the clearest and fullest unfolding of the people of God in their *corporate* character. It is there that the Body of Christ—the sum total of the elect, redeemed, regenerated people of God of *all* ages—is revealed as the object of His love and the reward of His sacrificial work. Though Christian churches are in nowise the antitype of the Commonwealth of Israel, nor the prototype of the Church in glory, yet in proportion as they *are* "Christian," they supply a continuous testimony to the practical separation of God's people from this present evil world.

Fifth, the representation given of the blessed *truth of sanctification*. Though justification and sanctification cannot be separated, yet they may be distinguished: that is to say, though these Divine blessings always go together, so that those whom God justifies He also sanctifies, still they are capable of being considered singly. When this be essayed, then they should be taken up in the order wherein they are presented to us in the Epistle of the Romans: in chapters 4 and 5 the Apostle expounds the doctrine of justification, in chapters 6 to 8 he treats of various aspects of sanctification. This same order is observable in connection with the Covenants: under the Abrahamic, the blessed truth of justification received clear illustration (Gen. 15:6); under the Siniatic, the equally blessed truth of sanctification was plainly demonstrated. The same order is also exemplified in Israel's

own history: they had been redeemed from Egypt *before* the great transaction at Sinai took place.

Now in order to the practice of true holiness there must be a deliverance from the power of Satan and the dominion of sin, for none are free to serve God in newness of spirit until they have been emancipated from the old bondage of depravity. Thus, the deliverance of Israel from the serfdom and slavery of Pharaoh laid the necessary foundation for them to enter the service of Jehovah. The grace which makes believers free from the dominion of sin supplies the strongest argument and motive imaginable to resist and mortify sin, and the greatest obligation to the practice of holiness. Most vividly was this adumbrated in Jehovah's dealings with the seed of Abraham, who had for so long groaned in the brick-kilns of Egypt: the gracious deliverance from their merciless taskmasters placed them under deep obligations to render a grateful obedience to their Benefactor, which He accordingly emphasised in His preface to the Ten Commandments.

That which occurred at Sinai typified *the sanctification of the Church*. The first words Jehovah addressed to Israel after they had reached the holy mount were, "Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles' wings, and *brought you unto Myself*" (Exo. 19:4). Here was their relative or *positional* sanctification: Israel had not only been separated from the heathen, but they were taken into a place of nearness to the Lord Himself. Then followed, "Now therefore if ye will obey My voice indeed and keep My covenant . . . ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests and *a holy nation*." Next, Moses was bidden to "Go unto the people, and *sanctify* them today and tomorrow, and let them *wash* their clothes" (Exo. 19:10): here there was a prefiguration of *practical* sanctification. In giving to them the Law, God provided Israel with *the rule* of holiness, the standard to which all conduct is to be conformed. Finally, in sprinkling the blood upon the people (Exo. 24:8) there was shadowed forth that which is declared in, "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might *sanctify* the people with His *own blood*, suffered without the gate" (Heb. 13:12).

Sixth, *the teaching of the Tabernacle* and the ceremonial institutions. And here we must distinguish between God's immediate design in connection with them and their ultimate purpose. The significance of the tabernacle and its worship can only be rightly understood when we apprehend the place given to it in connection with the ceremonial law. And, as we have shown in a previous article, the ceremonial law can only be understood when we clearly perceive its *subordination* to the moral law. The ceremonial law was an auxiliary of the moral, and the Levitical institutions were, in their primary aspect, *an exhibition* (by means of symbolical rites) of the *righteousness* enjoined in the Decalogue, by which the heart might be brought into some conformity therewith. Only by a clear insight, then, into the prior revelation of the Decalogue and of the prominent place it was designed to hold in the Mosaic economy, are we prepared to approach and consider that which was merely supplementary thereto.

It is failure to observe what has just been pointed out which leads to regarding the tabernacle and its service as *too exclusively typical*, causing recent writers to seek therein an adumbration of the Person and work of Christ as the only reason for the things belonging thereto. This is not only a mistake, but it ignores the key to sound interpretation, for only as we perceive the *symbolical* design of the Levitical institutions are we prepared to understand their *typical* purport. The more fully the ceremonial parts of the Mosaic legislation were fitted to accomplish their prime end of enforcing the requirements of the Deca-

logue—setting forth the personal *holiness* it demanded and supplying the means for the removal of unholy pollutions—the more must they have tended to fulfil their *ultimate* design: by producing convictions of sin and by testifying to the defilement which it produced, the heart was prepared *for Christ!*

The sanctuary is not only called “the tabernacle of the tent of the congregation” (Exo. 40:2, 32, etc.) or as the Hebrew more literally signifies “the tent of meeting,” but also “the tabernacle of the testimony” (Exo. 38:21, etc.) or “the tabernacle *of witness*” (Num. 17:7, 8). The “witness” there borne, conspicuously and continually, had respect more immediately to the ineffable holiness of God, and then by necessary implication to the fearful sinfulness of His people. The tables of stone in the ark “testified” to the righteous demands of the former, while they also witnessed in a condemnatory manner unto the latter. Thus, the “meeting” which God’s people were to have with Him in His habitation was not simply for fellowship, but it also bore a prominent respect unto *sins* on their part (against which the Law was ever testifying) and the *means* provided for their restoration to His favour and blessing.

“By the Law is the knowledge of sin” (Rom. 3:20) and Israel’s sense of their shortcomings would be in exact proportion to the insight they obtained of its true spiritual meaning and scope. The numerous restrictions and services of a bodily kind which were imposed by the Levitical statutes, as they all spoke (symbolically) of holiness and sin, so where their voice was honestly listened to, must have produced deeper impressions of guilt. “The Law entered, that the offence might *abound*” (Rom. 5:20), for while the ceremonial statutes were bidding men abstain from sin, they were at the same time multiplying the occasions of offence. They made things to be sins which were not so before, or in their own nature—as the prohibition from certain foods, the touching of a carcass, manufacturing the anointing oil for personal use, etc., etc.—thus it *increased* the number of transgressions and the burden upon the conscience.

Two things were thus outstandingly taught the Israelites. First, the ineffable holiness of God and the exalted standard of purity up to which He required His people to measure. Second, their own utter sinfulness, continually failing at some point or other to meet the Divine requirements. To the thoughtful mind it must have appeared that there was a struggle which was continually being waged between God’s holiness and the sinfulness of His creatures. And what would be the immediate outcome? Why, the oftener they were oppressed by a sense of guilt, the oftener would they resort to the blood of atonement. Necessarily so, for until sin was remitted and defilement removed they could not enter the holy habitation and commune with the Lord. How strikingly all of this finds its counterpart in the experience of the Christian! The more he is enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the more does he perceive his vileness and what a complete failure he is; and then the more is he made to appreciate the precious blood of Christ which “cleanseth from all sin.”

Having viewed the tabernacle as “the tabernacle of *witness*,” a brief word now on it as “the tent of *meeting*.” It was the place where God met with His people, and where they were permitted to draw nigh unto Him. This received its *typical realisation*, first in Christ personally, when He “became flesh and dwelt among us” (John 1:14), for in Him “dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (Col. 2:9). But second, it finds its realisation in Christ mystical, for as the fullness of the Godhead dwells in Christ, so again He dwells in the Church of true believers as His “fullness” (Eph. 1:23). The dwelling of God in the

man Christ Jesus was not for Himself alone, but as the Medium of intercourse between God and the Church, and therefore is the Church called “the House of God” (1 Tim. 3:15) or “an Habitation of God through the Spirit” (Eph. 2:22). Thus the grand truth symbolized of old in the tabernacle and temple receives its antitypical realization not in Christ apart, but in Christ as the Head of His redeemed, for through Him they have access to the Father Himself.

Seventh, *the significance of the promised land*. Canaan was the type of Heaven, and therefore the constitution appointed for those who were to occupy it, was framed with a view of rendering the affairs of time an image of eternity. The representation was, of course, imperfect, as was everything connected with the Mosaic economy, and rendered the more so by the failure of the people; nevertheless, there was a real and discernible likeness furnished of the true, and it had been far more so had Israel’s history approximated more closely to the ideal. Canaan was (as Heaven is) the inheritance and home of God’s redeemed. It was there Jehovah had His abode. It was the place of life and blessing (the land of “milk and honey”), and therefore death was regarded as abnormal and treated as a pollution. The inheritance was inalienable or untransferable, for if an Israelite sold his land, it reverted back to him at the Jubilee.

“Canaan stood to the eye of faith the type of heaven; and the character and condition of its inhabitants *should have presented the image* of what theirs shall be who have entered on the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world. The condition of such, we are well assured, shall be all blessedness and glory. The region of their inheritance shall be Immanuel’s land, where the vicissitudes of evil and the pangs of sufferings shall be alike unknown—where everything shall reflect the effulgent glory of its Divine Author, and streams of purest delight shall be ever flowing to satisfy the souls of the redeemed. But it is never to be forgotten that their condition shall be thus replenished with all that is attractive and good, because their character shall first have become *perfect in holiness*. No otherwise than as conformed to Christ’s image can they share with Him in His inheritance” (P. Fairbairn). Hence, God’s demand that Israel should be a holy and obedient people; and hence their banishment from Canaan when they apostatised.

In concluding this article let us pause and admire *that wondrous commingling* of justice and mercy, law and grace, holiness and leniency which was displayed throughout the Mosaic economy. This marvel of Divine wisdom, for there is nothing that can be compared with it in all the productions of man, appears at almost every point. We see it in the “adding” of the Siniatic covenant to the Abrahamic (Gal. 3:19), for whereas “promises” predominated in the one, *precepts* were more conspicuous in the other. We see it in God’s delivering Israel from the bondage of Egypt and then taking them into His own service. We see it in the giving of the ceremonial law as a supplement to the moral. We see it in the fact that while the Levitical institutions were constantly emphasising the purity which Jehovah required from His people, condemning all that was contrary thereto, yet means were provided for the promotion of the same and the removal of impurities. The whole is well summed up in “The law was given that grace might be sought; grace was given that the law might be fulfilled” (Augustine).

The entire ritual of the annual Day of Atonement (Lev. 16), which manifested the ground on which Jehovah dwelt in the midst of His people—the maintenance of *His* honour and the removal of *their* guilt—made it very evident that sin is a most solemn and serious matter, and that there was no hope for the guilty except on a footing of pure

grace. Yet it just as clearly demonstrated the fact that sovereign mercy was exercised in a way that conserved *the supremacy of the Law*. What else was the obvious meaning of Aaron's sprinkling the blood of atonement upon the very cover of the ark wherein were preserved the tables of stone (Lev. 16:14)? Each time Israel's high priest entered the holy of holies, the people were impressively taught that, in the enjoyment of their national privileges their sinful condition was not lost sight of, and that it was in no disregard of the Law that they were so highly favoured; for its just demands were satisfied by the blood of an innocent victim. Thus, the true object of all God's gracious conduct toward His people was to make them holy, delighting, after the inward man, in His Law.—A.W.P.

EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING.

“He which hath begun a good work in you will perform (finish) it” (Phil. 1:6). And *how* is an exercised soul to ascertain whether this “good work” has actually begun in him? How is he to distinguish between the natural workings of conscience and the supernatural conviction which the Holy Spirit produces? How is he to distinguish between the spasmodic religiousness of the flesh—which appears conspicuously in many of the devotees of Mohammed and the worshippers of the Virgin Mary, and finds its counterpart in thousands of those who come under the magnetic influence of “Evangelists” and “Revivalists”—and true spiritual aspirations after God? How is he to distinguish between a radical moral reformation and a Divine regeneration—for some of the effects of the one closely resemble those of the other? How is he to distinguish between the general work of the Spirit on the non-elect (like king Saul and those described in Heb. 6:4, 5) and the special work of the Spirit in the elect?

Such questions as the above may never have arisen in the minds of some of our readers, and now that they have seen them raised, may consider them as “hair-splitting” or theological distinctions of little practical interest. But others of our readers are deeply exercised by such considerations. They dare not take it for granted that all is well with them, until they are satisfied from God’s Word that a miracle of grace *has* been wrought in them. They fear that Satan may be deceiving them with his lies, comforting with a *false* assurance. As they seek to contemplate an endless eternity unto which time is so swiftly conducting them, they are deeply anxious to make sure whither they are bound. And well may such inquiries disturb our serenity, and agitate our minds: they are of vital moment, of vast importance—for they concern the difference there is between life and death, Heaven and Hell.

It is an essential branch of experimental preaching that must deal with such momentous issues. It is the bounden duty of the pulpit to afford help unto such exercised souls. It is the office of the minister to take up such distinctions and show clearly wherein the difference lies. It is the business of God’s servant to define and describe *of what* the “good work” of the Spirit consists, and *how* it may be identified. That “good work” is but another name for the new birth, which consists of the Spirit’s communicating to the heart a new nature, a principle of grace and holiness. It is the impartation of that which is radically different from anything that was in us by nature. It is something which has come from God, is Godlike in its nature, and which instinctively turns unto God. It is discoverable by the fact that there is now in the soul *a relish* for spiritual things, which was not there previously; a “relish” which goes far, far deeper than a mere intellectual interest being awakened in a new subject. It evidences itself by a hungering after righteousness, a thirsting for holiness, pantings after God Himself, yearnings for Christ.

But while an entirely new nature is imparted at regeneration, the old one is not removed, nor is it even *improved* or refined. The old nature, the “flesh,” indwelling sin, remains in the Christian to the end of his earthly life and is a constant source of grief to him. It opposes every aspiration and effort of the new nature. It is earthly, sensual, devilish, and craves only that which the swine feed on. Nor does the finishing of that “good work” in the soul effect any change for the better in the flesh, or even render it less active. No, the carrying on of that “good work” is the *preserving* of a spark of grace in an ocean of sin, the *maintaining* of the new nature in a heart that is desperately and incurably wicked. Notwithstanding every effort of carnal enmity to quench it, love for God sur-

vives—"faint, *yet pursuing*" (Judg. 8:4); and despite all the ragings of unbelief, faith's head is kept above the waters.

Just as the natural infant clings instinctively to its mother and yearns for her breast, so the spiritual babe seeks after Christ and desires the pure milk of the Word. *That* is another evidence of the Spirit's "good work" in the soul. The Spirit's quickening is in order to capacitate the *heart* for Christ, for one who is yet "dead in trespasses and sins" has neither spiritual desires nor spiritual ability. But once a person has been born again, and truly convicted of his ruined and lost condition, he is spiritually fitted to receive the Gospel. It is at this point he is ready to hear how the Spirit works in revealing Christ to such, bringing them to believe on Him, and thereby putting them into actual possession of Him. The Spirit causes the quickened soul to live over the truth of the Gospel in his own mind, moves him to give full credit thereto, mix faith with the same, and derive spiritual nourishment from it.

As the truth of the Gospel is received into the heart—in some cases rapidly, in others much more slowly—it becomes the means of the believer's growing into an experimental and practical acquaintance with Christ, to be rooted and grounded in Him, to live upon Him. When God is pleased to shine upon the souls of the elect, and make an open discovery to them of His work of grace within them, or when Christ is first made a living and precious reality to their hearts, there is a going forth of their spiritual affections unto Him. All seems to be life and vigour in their souls, difficulties vanish, doubts are dispelled, they are quite carried out of themselves, lifted above their sins and iniquities, and made to rejoice in Christ and praise God for His wondrous grace. This is "the love of thine espousals" (Jer. 2:2), the "joy of salvation."

It is very rare, however, that this blissful season is of long duration, and wisely has God so ordered this. Such spiritual ecstasy which is often experienced by newly-converted souls would, if it lasted, unfit them for the discharge of life's duties in this world. For example, one engaged in office work would be unable to concentrate on his books if his mind were rapt with visions of glory. There was only one Elim—with its well of water and palm trees—for Israel in the wilderness. God grants His people a fore-taste of Heaven and its realities, and then brings them down to a consciousness that they are still on earth. Even the Apostle Paul needed a thorn in the flesh, lest he be exalted above measure, after he had been caught up to Paradise. Heavy ballast is needed in her hold if the ship is to sail steadily, and this the believer obtains by painful discoveries of his *corruptions*.

It is therefore the duty of the preacher to faithfully warn the young convert that the peace, joy and assurance which usually follows the first realization of sins' forgiveness, will in turn be succeeded by fierce temptations, inward conflicts, sad failures which will produce grief, darkness, and doubtings. It was so with Abraham, with Moses, with Job, with Peter, with Paul; yea, with all the saints whose biographies are recorded at any length in the Scriptures. Great changes are to be expected in the young convert's feelings and frames, so that his comforts are dampened, and the dew of death seems to settle upon his graces. A deeper realization of his awful depravity—what he is by nature—will make him groan and cry out "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Rom. 7:24); yet that only makes way for a fuller and further weaning from *self*.

Very often the young Christian is allowed by God to sink yet lower in his experience. Satan is let loose upon him and sin rages fiercely within him, and strive and pray as he may, it often obtains the upper hand over him. Guilt weighs heavily on his conscience, no relief is granted from any source until he now seriously questions the genuineness of his conversion and greatly fears that Satan has fatally deceived him. He feels that his heart is as hard as the nether millstone, that faith in him is dead, that there is no help and no hope for him. He cannot imagine that one who has been born again and is indwelt by the Holy Spirit could be so enslaved by sin. If God *were* his Father, He would surely hear his cries and grant deliverance from his spiritual enemies. But the heavens are as brass over him until the very breath of prayer seems frozen within him.

Hoping against hope he seeks relief from the pulpit. But in vain. The sermons he hears only aggravate his woes for they depict the Christian's experience as vastly different from his own: they deal with the bright side and say little or nothing on the dark side. If he converses with the professing Christians of the day he is likely to get laughed at, and told to cease being occupied with himself and look only to Christ—to lay hold of the promises of God and go on his way rejoicing. *That* is the very thing he most of all desires: “to will IS present” with him, “but how to perform that which is good” he “finds NOT” (Rom. 7:18). Poor soul! is there no one that understands his case? no one qualified to minister comfort to him? Alas, alas, there are few indeed in this frothy age.

Here, again, *experimental* preaching is urgently needed, preaching which enters into the very experiences described above—experiences shared, in some measure, by all quickened souls while they are in this “Wilderness of Sin.” But O what wisdom from on High (not from books!) is needed if, on the one hand, the “smoking *flax*” is not to be “quenched” and the “bruised need” be not broken—on the other hand, sin be not made light of, failures be not excused, and the standard of holiness be not lowered. The pulpit should declare frankly that there are times when the mind of the believer is filled with deep distress, that there are seasons when the light of God's countenance is turned away from His people, and the Devil is permitted to sorely wound them, tell them that they have committed the unpardonable sin, and that there is no hope for them; but that such experiences *are no proof* at all that they are still unregenerate.

The preacher has to bear steadily in mind that if there are among his hearers carnal professors who are ready to seize eagerly anything which would bolster them up in their false assurance, there are also feeble and ailing babes in Christ which require tender nursing (Isa. 60:4; 1 Thess. 2:7), and little ones of God's family who lack assurance, and because of this think the worst of themselves. It is therefore wise business to “take forth the precious from the vile” (Jer. 15:19): that is, by a *discriminating* ministry expose and terrify the sin-hardened, but speak words of comfort to the real mourners in Zion. “In our congregations there are wheat and chaff on the same floor: we cannot distinguish them by *name*, but we must by *character*” (Matthew Henry). We must make it clear that those who regard sin lightly, have not the fear of God before their eyes; those not grieved because they find so much in their hearts opposed to Divine holiness, *are unregenerate*—no matter how much head-knowledge of the Truth they possess or how loud be their Christian profession

It is at this very point that the true under-shepherd of Christ stands out in marked contrast from the “hireling” of the flock, concerning whom God says, “Ye have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad; and strengthened the hands of the

wicked, that he should not return from his wicked way, by promising him life” (Ezek. 13:22). On the one hand, the regenerate are “made sad” by pratings about “the victorious life,” or “the second blessing,” or “the baptism of the Spirit.” These blind leaders of the blind claim to have so “got out of Romans 7 into Romans 8,” to have so left behind them all inward conflicts and agonizing doubtings, as to virtually have entered into the state of the glorified—causing real Christians to conclude that *they* know nothing of that Gospel which is “the power of God unto salvation” and must be complete strangers to a miracle of grace within them.

On the other hand, these false prophets declare that all who have “accepted Christ as their personal Saviour” are saved, even though they have not yet received the second blessing, that they are justified though not “entirely sanctified.” They assure the godless, the worldling, the pleasure-intoxicated, that they may be saved at this very moment on the sole and simple condition that they believe God so loved them as to give His Son to die for them. Thus peace is assured to the unconcerned “when there is no peace,” the hearts of the careless are hardened, and the wicked are promised life without any regard to God’s demand that they must “forsake” their idols. “Nor can anything strengthen the hands of sinners more than to tell them they may be saved in their sins without repentance; or that there may be repentance, though they do not return from their wicked ways” (Matthew Henry).

The duty of God’s servants is clearly enough defined in this respect: “They shall teach My people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean” (Ezek. 44:23). Surely it is of vast importance that a deeply exercised soul should know whether or not *his* sins have been cleansed by the blood of Christ. But for *that*, teaching is necessary, teaching from a Divinely-qualified teacher; for if an inexperienced “novice” lays his hand to such a task he will only make bad matters worse and add to the fearful confusion which now prevails on every side. Only one who has himself sailed much in these deep waters is fitted to serve as pilot to floundering ships; none but one who had been harassed by Satan as Bunyan had, could have written “The Pilgrim’s Progress.”

“That we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort *wherewith we ourselves* are comforted of God” (2 Cor. 1:4) states the principle. One who has actually suffered from a serious disease is best fitted to recognize symptoms of it in others and recommend the remedies which he found most efficacious. Furthermore, one must be personally taught by the Spirit before he can explain to sin-sick and Satan-tormented souls the “mystery of the Gospel”—the strange paradoxes of the Christian life. It is one thing to *read* “for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:10), it is quite another matter to *prove* the truth of it in actual experience. Nor is that statement any more paradoxical than the fact that it is the spiritually “poor” who are spiritually rich (Matt. 5:3). And equally true is it that those who most clearly perceive their filthiness and mourn over their pollution are they who have the best evidence that *their* sins have been washed away; as the most humble souls are the ones who most bewail their pride.

It is by no means easy to combine tenderness with faithfulness, sympathy for doubting sons with a deep concern for the honour of God. Of old the Lord complained, “For they have healed the hurt of the daughter of My people *slightly*, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 8:11). We have personally met not a few who were pitying themselves when they should have been condemning themselves, hugging their doubts instead

of contritely confessing them to God. Unbelief is *not* a virtue, but a heinous *sin*; it is to be reprov'd, and never excused. There is no real relief for a badly festered limb by scratching the skin: the lancet must pierce right down to the seat of the trouble if the poisonous matter is to be pressed out. Self-love, self-complacency, self-righteousness must be thoroughly probed by the knife of the Word before the heart will be broken before God.

The great issue between God and man is SIN, and salvation is deliverance from sin. True, that in the fullest meaning of the term, salvation is not complete in this life, for glorification is included within its scope; nevertheless there is a very real sense in which the believer is initially saved even now. In other words, there is a present aspect of salvation, as well as a future; and that present salvation is an experimental thing, as well as judicial. But it is just at this point the conscientious Christian confronts his most acute problem: how dare he profess to be saved from sin, or even regard himself as now *being* saved from it, when sin rages so fiercely within and so often gets the upper hand of him?

Here, again, the business of the preacher is to throw light upon this problem. First, by showing that the believer is *not* yet saved from the *presence* of sin, for it still indwells him; nor is he saved from the *power* of sin, except relatively, for it is still a mighty force within him, utterly beyond his control. Second, by showing that the believer *is* now saved *from the love of sin*. THAT is the essence of the matter. The thrice holy God is "of purer eyes than to behold evil, and canst not look on iniquity" (Hab. 1:13), and therefore He abhors all sin, saying, "Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jer. 44:4). But man by nature *loves* sin, therefore the first thing God does in salvation is to put within His people a principle or nature that *hates* sin.

But here, too, we must pass from generalities and get down to details. The honest soul will at once ask, If I really hate sin, why do I so often yield to it? If I have been delivered from the love of sin, why can Satan's temptations still appeal to me? The answer is, because the "flesh" is still left in you, and it remains *unholy* to the end of its history. Our responsibility is to "make not provision for the flesh" (Rom. 13:14), to "mortify" its members (Col. 3:5), to unsparingly judge it, root and branch (1 Cor. 11:31, 32), to confess its evil works (1 John 1:9). The fact that the believer resists sin, prays and strives against it, mourns and groans over it, loathes himself for it, are so many proofs that he no longer loves it as he once did. Here, then, is the task of experimental preaching, to make clear what salvation is, and what it is not; to trace out the heart's history of one who is being saved, and this in such a way that the unregenerate are not emboldened in their sins, nor the regenerate crushed by their defeats. There is urgent need to show what the love of sin consists of, and then to describe *how* a holy hatred of sin may be recognized, and what is compatible and what is not compatible with this hatred.—A.W.P.

THE DOCTRINE OF SANCTIFICATION.

12. *Its Process.*

At the beginning of the March article we pointed out that by the *process* of sanctification we mean the principal actings of those who have already been manifestatively set apart by God unto Himself and for Himself. It is with the experimental and practical side of the subject that we are now treating, with that which is the sequel to regeneration, namely, God's sustaining and developing the nature or principle communicated at the new birth, and the believer's co-operation with Him therein. In other words, it is the spiritual growth of the babe in Christ we are here concerned with, more especially as that growth follows the twofold process of mortification and vivification—the mortifying of the old nature, and the vivifying of the new. Having devoted the last two months' articles to the former, we now turn to a consideration of the latter.

It has already been pointed out that the two different actings of the Christian in mortification and vivification are *not* so distinct that the one can go on independently of or at a distinct time from the other, for the one necessarily accompanies the other; nevertheless, in explaining that twofold process of the believer's experimental sanctification or spiritual growth, they need to be separately expounded. The *order* in which we should consider them is obvious: we must die to sin (relatively speaking) before we can (in any measure) live to God. The privative must precede the positive: disease must be subdued before health can be enjoyed; the lamp must be cleansed before its light can shine forth clearly; rags must be discarded before new apparel is put on. This order is uniformly insisted on throughout the Scriptures: let the following passages be taken as examples.

"Cease to do evil" comes before "learn to do well" (Isa. 1:16, 17). "Hate the evil, and love the good" (Amos 5:15): the latter is impossible without the former. Self must be denied before Christ can be followed (Matt. 16:24). "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God" (Rom. 6:13). "He died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them" (2 Cor. 5:15): we have to cease living unto self ere we can live unto Christ; yea, we must be "crucified with Christ" before we can live by faith (Gal. 2:20). The putting off of the old man precedes the putting on of the new (Eph. 4:22-24). We have to be made conformable to Christ's death ere we can attain unto spiritual resurrection (Phil. 3:10, 11). Denying ungodliness and worldly lusts comes before living soberly and righteously (Titus 2:12). Weights must be laid aside before we can run the race set before us (Heb. 12:1).

As the term is used theologically "vivification" means a *living unto God*. It is not enough that the believer should die unto sin: he must also walk in newness of life. Recess from the world is worthless unless it issues in access to God. Practical holiness consists not so much in a mere abstinence from a sensual life, but principally in living unto God—delighting in Him, desires after Him, carefulness to please Him, loathness to offend Him. God has imparted grace to the regenerate not simply that they may *have* it, but that they *use* the same to His glory: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Gal. 5:25). The grace God has given His people is to be exercised by them in a course of hearty obedience to Him, according to the directions which He has given in His Word.

God has predestinated His people to be conformed to the image of His Son: now Christ died unto sin (Rom. 6:10)—so must we; Christ lives unto God—so must we. In mortification there is a likeness unto Christ's death, and in vivification (or living unto

God) there is a likeness to His resurrection: the latter is the inseparable adjunct of the former. Christ cannot be divided: those who partake with Him in the one act, partake with Him in the other. God will not leave His work in us half done: if He makes us to hate and forsake the evil, then He also causes us to love and seek after the good. In Psalm 1 the godly man is not only described as walking not in the counsel of the ungodly, standing not in the way of sinners, and sitting not in the seat of the scornful, but also as delighting in the Law of the Lord, meditating therein day and night, and then bringing forth his fruits in his season. God subdues sin in us to make way for a life of righteousness.

From the experimental side sanctification is the acting out of that holy principle received at the new birth. At regeneration a new nature is bestowed, which re-capacitates the soul Godwards, so that the heart is now inclined toward Him, delights in Him, pants after Him. But let us be more specific, and describe something of this new disposition of mind. First, there is now *a holy reverence* for God, on account of His Person, His perfections, His works. Of the unsanctified it is said, “there is no fear of God before their eyes” (Rom. 3:18); but where a principle of grace and holiness has been infused the fear of God quickly appears, for it is “the beginning of wisdom” (Prov. 9:10). The regenerate man cannot now do the things which he did before, and that others do: “but so did not I, because of the fear of God” (Neh. 5:15).

It is this heart-awe for God, this godly reverence, this filial fear, which is one of the roots from which springs spiritual obedience, for such reverence necessarily yields submission to the revealed will of God. When Israel avowed at Sinai “All that the Lord hath said, we will do,” He answered, “O that there were such an heart in them, that they would *fear Me, and keep* all My commandments always, that it might be well with them and with their children forever!” (Deut. 5:29): the fear of God, then, precedes the keeping of His commandments. It is this principle of godly reverence which the Lord is pledged to give unto His people according to the terms of the new covenant: “I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever” (Jer. 32:39): that “fear” is the same as the “new spirit” of (Ezek. 11:19), and as the writing of His law on our hearts (Heb. 8:10). This same spiritual grace is also called fearing “the LORD and (not His “judgments,” but) His *goodness*” (Hosea 3:5).

Second, accompanying this filial awe is a sincere and holy *love* for God, from which springs acceptable obedience to Him. That love consists in the heart’s being drawn out to God and delighting itself in Him. It is a disposition and inclination of soul unto communion with Him, with complacency, so that its language now is “Whom have I in heaven but Thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire besides Thee” (Psa. 73:25). An unregenerate man cannot love God nor take any delight in His perfections, ways or worship, for “The carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom. 8:7). The unsanctified, desire to depart from Him and dismiss Him from their thoughts. Job says of the hypocrite “will he delight himself in the Almighty? will he always call upon God?” (27:10)—no, he will not. But in regeneration the Lord circumcises the heart, or renews and sanctifies it *to love Him with all the soul, and that sincerely and cordially.*

Third, vivification manifests itself in a complete *submission* to the will of God in all things, not only to His perceptive will, but to His disposing will also, even to the most adverse dispensations of providence. Instances of this may be seen in the cases of Aaron, Eli, David, and others, who rebelled not nor murmured, but were quiet and silent, resigned to the Divine will under the most severe rebukes and the most painful trials: see

Leviticus 10:3, 1 Samuel 3:18; 2 Samuel 15:25, 26. Much of sanctification lies in the conformity of our wills to the will of God. As the saintly Usher said, "Sanctification is nothing less than for a man to be brought to an entire resignation of his will to the will of God, and to live in the offering up of his soul continually in the flames of love as a whole burnt offering."

Fourth, vivification is expressed by being *spiritually minded*. "To be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:6); that is, the bent and inclination of a renewed mind is unto spiritual things, for it is that whereby we live to God and enjoy peace with Him. By nature we care only for the things of the flesh, minding earthly concerns (Phil. 3:19)—our corrupt hearts are set upon them, disposed towards them, eager after whatever leads to the enjoyment of them. But the regenerate mind things above, and in vivification their affections are drawn out after and fixed upon them (Col. 3:3). It was by virtue of this that David declared his soul followed hard after God (Psa. 63:8), or inclined earnestly unto all those ways whereby he might live unto Him, and come unto the enjoyment of him. This same fervour and diligence is seen in the case of the Apostle Paul: Philippians 3:13, 14. None but God can satisfy the sanctified.

Fifth, vivification is seen in *religious exercises* or acts of devotion to God, particularly in the actings of grace in them. Here too there is a radical difference between the unregenerate and the regenerate: the former engages in religious exercises formally, as a matter of duty; but the latter (when in a healthy state) takes delight therein. The ministry of the Word is attended with affection, and prayer is engaged in with fervour, for prayer is the very breath of a sanctified soul toward God. It is not so much in the outward performance that the believer differs from the unbeliever, as in the holy actings of his *heart*, such as eager desires after communion with God therein. The sanctified soul cannot be satisfied with using the means of grace unless he meets with God in them. A sanctified soul seeks the glory of God in all that he does.

In whomsoever the new nature or principle of grace is, it disposes the whole soul unto the acts and duties of holiness, and that *universally or impartially*. There is no duty of holiness but what there is a disposition unto it in the sanctified heart. There is a respect unto *all* of God's commandments. Some of them may be more contrary unto our natural inclinations than others, some may more cross with our present secular interests, some are attended with more difficulties and disadvantages than others, and some of them may be rendered very dangerous by the peculiar circumstances of particular seasons. Nevertheless, if there be a gracious principle in our hearts, it will equally incline and dispose us to every one of them in their proper place and time. The reason for this is, that the new nature equally inclines unto all that pertains to it, as all acts of holy obedience do.

Again; the new nature disposes the heart unto duties of holiness *constantly and evenly*. He in whom the principle of grace resides fears the Lord always, though often the godless flesh gains the upper hand in him. Nevertheless, so far as that new nature itself is concerned, in all instances and on all occasions it equally inclines the mind unto acts of holy obedience. It is true that the actings of grace which proceed from it are in us sometimes more vigorous and intense than at others. It is also true that we are ourselves sometimes more watchful and careful in acting grace, whether in our general course or in solemn duties. There are times when the flesh rages in us, and when Satan opposes more fiercely—when grace is obstructed; but that does not clash with what we first said. That living principle of holiness is like a fountain of water ever springing up (John 4:14),

though as its stream passes on in its course, it meets with opposition and hindrance; yet its waters continue to press on.

Once more; the new nature disposes the heart *permanently* thus. It will never cease inclining the soul unto the duties of holiness until it comes to the end of them all in the final enjoyment of God. This holy principle is an incorruptible seed, abiding in the believer forever, and constantly acts according to its own constitution. True, it is our duty to make use of all the appointed means to preserve and cherish the principle itself and its actings. We are to “show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end” (Heb. 6:11). It is also true that sometimes; and in some persons, upon fierce temptations, with the violence and deceitfulness of lusts, the principle of grace may seem for a season to be utterly stifled, and thus this property of *permanency* be destroyed; as it appeared to have been the case with David under his sad fall and decay. Yet such is its nature, that it is immortal, everlasting, and shall never absolutely die, which is owing solely to the faithfulness, power and grace of God.

Were we to stop at this point the Christian reader would indeed have occasion to lay down the article in despair, feeling that it has quite cut him off, that he has “neither part nor lot in this matter.” Let it be duly pointed out, then, that in the regenerate and sanctified there are yet inclinations and dispositions *to sin*, proceeding from the contrary principle of the flesh—that vicious, corrupt, depravity of our nature, disposing the soul unto all that is evil. This still continues in us, then, working constantly in varying degrees of power. This it is which occasions such a strange paradox and puzzle to the sincere believer: that in him are such *contrary* inclinations, opposing one another, acting adversely about the same objects and ends. While sin has received a fatal wound, it is far from being dead, and though the believer be most diligent and faithful in prosecuting the work of mortification, yet the task of vivification will be frequently, yea, hourly, opposed and retarded. The qualities pertaining to the principle of holiness (which we have described) pertain unto itself, but the qualities of sin ever resist them. But to return to our immediate subject.

The thoughtful reader will, no doubt, be ready to ask, If the principle of holiness communicated at regeneration possesses such characteristics as reverence for and love to God, and if it also constantly inclines the soul unto all duties of obedience, then why do we find the Psalmist praying, “unite my heart *to* fear Thy name” (86:11), and “*incline* my heart unto Thy testimonies”(119:36)? Do not such petitions seem to contradict our assertions that the new nature itself disposes the heart toward God and is the root from which all acceptable obedience to Him springs? No, but they *do* show that, notwithstanding the spirituality of the new nature, yet it is entirely *dependent on* the operations of the Holy Spirit for its actual exercise on all occasions. Only as He strengthens us with might in the inner man, renews us day by day, leads us in the paths of righteousness, are we enabled to render unto God that which He requires. The new nature is what makes the soul *meet for* good works, but the Spirit must supply the necessary *power*.

This it is which explains the prayers of the Psalmist. Take, again, “Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; quicken Thou me in Thy way” (119:37). Note, first, the *order* is the same here as in all the passages quoted in the third paragraph, mortification preceding vivification. The first clause is an asking God to remove the impediment unto obedience: “vanity” being a general term to include all carnal and worldly things. The second clause is asking God for additional grace, to make our affections lively toward

spiritual and heavenly things. "Quicken" is the actuation of the spiritual life, grace to perform all duties with cheerfulness and zeal. Our original quickening was at regeneration (Eph. 2:1), when grace or spiritual life was first infused; but we stand in need, constantly, of further renewing, so that the life of grace may be invigorated—just as a person, even a healthy one, requires to have his physical strength renewed each day.

The nature of this need for renewal may be summed in two words: comfort, and enlivening. By nature our hearts are prone to sink when trouble comes upon us: unless grace be renewed in our hearts, the soul faints. When left to ourselves, we become so occupied with our trials, and so distrustful of God to undertake for us, that we are overwhelmed, so as to have no spirit or courage left. Then it is that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities: "This is My comfort in my affliction: for Thy word hath *quickened* me" (Psa. 119:50)—God has raised up the heart above the trouble, increasing faith and strengthening patience. Again: by nature we are slothful unto the performance of all duties of holiness, and when left to ourselves a spirit of lethargy seizes us, creeping over the soul until its faculties are paralyzed unto all spiritual endeavour. It is then that the Spirit helpeth our infirmities by re-animating us, calling into exercise the new nature.

When the believer grows slack in using the appointed means of grace, or is slothful in pursuing the business of the spiritual life deadness soon falls upon the soul. A key never turned will rust in the lock, and grace not used quickly becomes lukewarm: "Take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be *overcharged* with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and *cares of this life*" (Luke 21:34). Such "quicken" of the believer, then, is absolutely essential for his well-being. Without it he cannot pray with any spiritual vigour: "*Quicken* us, and we will *call* upon Thy name" (Psa. 80:18). Without it he cannot hear the Word to profit: "For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing" (Matt. 13:15); "I have longed after Thy precepts: quicken me in Thy righteousness" (Psa. 119:40). Without it he cannot obey: "quicken me after Thy lovingkindness; *so* shall I *keep* the testimony of Thy mouth" (Psa. 119:88).

But let it not be forgotten that throughout the entire process of mortification and vivification there is a concurrence between the believer and the Spirit. Those who are born again should show the reality of that miracle of grace by being as earnest in the pursuit of holiness, as they were formerly in seeking the pleasures of sin. *Living unto God* does not connote a single act done once for all (at a "consecration" meeting), but is what must mark the general course of our conduct. The Christian is required to put forth his best endeavours: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but *I follow after*, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and *reaching forth* unto those things which are before" (Phil. 3:11-13). Alas, how often God has cause to say, "There is none that calleth upon My name, *that stirreth up himself* to take hold of Me" (Isa. 64:7). O that we may "*stir up* the gift of God, which is in us" (2 Tim. 1:6).—A.W.P.

SERVANTS OF GOD.

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:22). In this verse the Holy Spirit presents to us an epitome of the exceeding great and precious privileges which are the birth-right of the child of God, of *every* real believer in the Lord Jesus. The important truths presented in the previous verses, and indeed throughout the whole of this Epistle, are here summarized, for the clearer apprehension and assurance of faith, that the Christian might see at a glance what is his true standing in the sight of God, and what are those wondrous blessings which Divine grace has bestowed upon him; and this, that his heart may be drawn more and more away from the world, that he may delight himself in and glorify his Lord and Master. Four grand facts are presented for faith to lay hold of. First, the believer has been gloriously emancipated: “being made free from sin.” Second, he is now consecrated: “become servants to God.” Third, he is, in union with Christ, as a branch of the true Vine, fruitful unto holiness. Fourth, the end before him, the sure issue of all his conflicts and trials is “everlasting life.”

In the verse before us the Apostle is not seeking to *persuade* Christians to separate from sin, he is not *promising* that upon the fulfillment of certain conditions they will enter into freedom from sin, but is *stating a positive fact*, which is true of *every* believer. He is not dealing with a contingency, or speaking of some future good, but affirms a present reality: “but *now* being made free from sin.” This is not a matter of attainment, but a miracle of Divine grace, Christ has “made an end of sins,” He has made “reconciliation for iniquity,” He has brought in “everlasting righteousness” (Dan. 9:24); and because the believer is identified with Christ, because in the sight of the Judge of all the earth he is legally one with the Redeemer, he is now, judicially, “free from sin”—its penalty has been endured, its guilt has been blotted out, its condemnation has been removed. “But now being made free from sin” is in the *passive* voice, for it is an act of grace upon us, and *not* an act put forth by us; it is an act of which we are the subjects, and not a work of which we are the agents.

“And become servants to God” (Rom. 6:22). Here, too, as in the preceding clause, the Apostle is dwelling upon the believer’s *standing before God*. Divine grace has given him a new status: in his unregenerate days he was “the servant of sin” (v. 20): sin was his master, he was its subject. But because of his legal oneness with Christ; and because of his vital union with Him (when the Spirit created him anew in Christ), he now has a new standing and a new Master. Being made free from sin (judicially), he has become “servant to God.” Here again the passive is used; it is *not* by an act of theirs, but by God’s omnipotent act of grace which grafted them into Christ, constituting them one with Jehovah’s Servant, which made them “servants to God.” This is the necessary and blessed sequel to our having been “made free from sin.” Said David of old, “O LORD, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant, *and* the son of Thine handmaid: Thou hast *loosed my bonds*” (Psa. 116:16).

What, then, is the believer’s responsibility in connection with this blessed fact, what is to be his *response* thereto? First, to *believe* it, to receive it by childlike and unquestioning faith, and that, on the sole but sufficient testimony of God’s own Word. Second, to *conduct* himself accordingly, to submit himself unto God, to be in complete subjection to the will of his new Master, to obey Him in all things. His bounden duty and his blessed privilege is to now translate that grand fact into his own practical experience: to be God’s in-

telligent, willing, dutiful servant, to endeavour to please Him at all times, to seek to honour and glorify Him on every occasion. The Christian is to recognize his new status, utterly deserting his old master, and loving and obeying his new One with all his heart and mind. This is the victory of faith. This is the return which is due from us unto God's amazing grace toward us. This is to show forth our oneness with God's perfect Servant, to follow the example which He has left us.

Freedom from sin is the direct consequence of our union with the Lord Jesus, and the fact of our being the servants of God is also and equally the result of that union. We have no standing before God as His servants, no power for service, no spirit for service, no acceptance of our service, except in our union with Christ. Only as this is realized by faith, and only as we truly exercise faith therein, will there be any actual making good of it in our experience and daily walk. This is but another way of saying that, only as our hearts are truly conscious of the fact that we are *not our own*, but the purchased property of God, shall we conduct ourselves accordingly. The same grand truth is expressed again in "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Eph. 2:10). If we be the servants of God, it is because we are created in Christ Jesus for that very service: just as our being made free from sin was owing to the work of Christ for us, so we are created in Him for this very privilege of service.

How frequently in Scripture is Christ presented to us as God's Servant. Jehovah had but one perfect Servant here, One with whom He was altogether pleased, to whom He could with implicit confidence entrust the affairs of the covenant, namely, Jesus Christ. Of Him God says, "Behold My Servant, whom I uphold; Mine Elect, in whom My soul delighteth" (Isa. 42:1); "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently" (Isa. 52:13); "By His knowledge shall My righteous Servant justify many" (Isa. 53:11). In the New Testament we find the Apostle Paul calling attention to this: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Phil. 2:5-7); and we have Him announcing Himself on the earth "Lo! I come, to do Thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:7)—do it unreservedly, do it joyfully, do it unceasingly, no matter what it involved.

It is refreshing to the heart to read through the four Gospels with this thought in view, and observe how often Christ is there seen in this special character. "The Son of man came not to be ministered unto; but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Matt. 20:28). See Him in John 4, sitting weary at the well. The disciples go to buy bread, and on returning they found Him full of love, life and power, speaking to the poor woman of Samaria. They said "Hath any man brought Him ought to eat? and He answered, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me" (vv. 33, 34). Behold, God's perfect Servant! And again He said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me" (John 6:38). So too in Gethsemane "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt" exemplified His changeless attitude of perfect submission to the Father.

Nor has Christ ceased to be God's Servant, no, not even though He is now exalted high above all angels, and sits at the right hand of the Majesty on High. As Hebrews 8:2 tells us, He is the "Minister (or Servant) of the Sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man." He is there discharging His priestly office, ever living to make intercession for His people. He is there, active, as the Angel of the Covenant. It was thus that John beheld Him in the apocalyptic visions, standing at the altar in

Heaven, "having a golden censer; and there was given unto Him much incense, that He should offer it with the prayers of all saints" (Rev. 8:3). He is there discharging His kingly office, "upholding all things by the word of His power (Heb. 1:3). He is there preparing a place for us (John 14:2). He is there, submissively, subjecting Himself to God's will, "expecting till His enemies be made His footstool" (Heb. 10:13). Behold, Jehovah's perfect Servant, and our perfect Exemplar.

And you and I, dear Christian reader, are "*servants to God*. It is a great privilege and high honour to be the servants of an earthly monarch, but who can conceive the dignity and honour of being a servant of the Most High, the only Potentate! When Paul would glory in his calling, he made mention of the Lord, saying "whose I am and whom I *serve*." When Peter would magnify his office, he wrote "Simon Peter, a servant and an Apostle of Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 1:1). When James would present his credentials to his readers, he wrote "James, a *servant* of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ" (1:1); so too with Jude (1:1). When the queen of Sheba came that long journey to hear and see the wisdom of Solomon, she said, "Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, *and* that hear thy wisdom" (1 Kings 10:8). O, my reader, if the servants of Solomon were happy and privileged, how much more so are the servants of the living God!

The service of God is one of *freedom*, yea, it is the only one where perfect freedom is to be found; yet that is the very opposite of the natural man's idea, So thoroughly has sin perverted his judgment and blinded his mind, that he calls light darkness and darkness light, bitters sweet and sweets bitter. The unregenerate suppose that to be in subjection to God is the end of all freedom, and entering into the most irksome bondage; and, contrariwise, they imagine that the more they refuse Divine restraints, the greater their liberty. Poor deluded souls: it is the service of sin which tyrannizes and enslaves. "For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness . . . but now being made free from sin, and become servants to God" (Rom. 6:20, 22). It is the servant of God, the one who willingly renders obedience to Him, that is "the Lord's *freeman*" (1 Cor. 7:22). God does not force His people into His service, but constrains them by His love, and their language is, "I will walk at *liberty*: for I seek Thy precepts" (Psa. 119:45).

"Become servants to God." A good master provides for his servants. Is not God a good Master? O how He thinks of and provides for His servants. He supplies their every need both spiritual and temporal, makes all things work together for their good, and protects them as they journey through the Enemy's land. The realization of this should comfort and stabilise our hearts, and it should encourage us to come boldly to the Throne of Grace, and seek from God fresh supplies of grace and temporal mercies, on the ground that we *are* His "servants." Turn to the Psalms and see how frequently David did so: you will find that again and again he asked of God and presented *this* as his plea: "Save *Thy servant*"; "Cause Thy face to shine upon *Thy servant*"; "hear the prayer of *Thy servant*." So in the New Testament we behold aged Simeon looking death in the face and saying, "Lord, now lettest *Thy servant* depart in peace." It is indeed a wondrous blessing to be the servant of God, and have such an One to look after us.

But this great privilege and honour carries with it a definite responsibility, namely, to conduct ourselves *as* "servants." A good servant is described in Scripture as one who has a *watchful eye*: "Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the LORD

our God” (Psa. 123:2)—in the Orient, instead of giving directions by word of mouth, they are often given by a gesture of the hand or glance of the eye. A good servant, then, will be attentive to his Master’s will, that there may be no delay in pleasing Him. A good servant will have *a listening ear*: “speak, LORD, for Thy servant heareth” (1 Sam 3:9). A good servant will have *ready feet*: “I will run in the way of Thy commandments” (Psa. 119:32). A good servant will have a *submissive will*; that is the primary and essential qualification—to have no will of my own, but to be completely yielded to the Lord.

“Christian service” is a vastly different thing from that which is so designated in modern Christendom. In many places doing what is termed “personal work” and “winning souls to Christ” is what now passes for “Christian service,” and thousands are thus engaged who were never called nor qualified by God for it. Others suppose that only those whom God has called to occupy the pulpit or sent forth to evangelize the heathen, are His “servants.” Such are His *official* servants, and none others have any title to occupy such a position. But *all* Christians are the servants of God: called to a life of obedience, whether they are shoeblacks, street-sweepers, or housewives. Having delivered him from the power of Darkness, the believer is now to live unto God and for Him in whatever position Divine providence has called him to occupy.

In conclusion let it be pointed out that *a rich reward* is promised the good and faithful servant. The Lord Jesus declared “Where I am, there shall also My servant be” (John 12:26). “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ” (Col. 3:24). “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall serve Him” (Rev. 22:3). Now serving Him in the office, the shop, or the kitchen, then serving Him in the courts of the Father’s House above.—A.W.P.