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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

REVEALED

There is a very real sense in which “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). All the blessed realities of Christian experience are entirely hid from his perceptions. He is a stranger to harrowing convictions of sin, the conscious removal of an intolerable load from his conscience, the joy of assured pardon, the blessedness of communion with God, the ceaseless conflict between the flesh and the spirit, the ups and downs of the Christian life. He may have a nominal and notional knowledge thereof, but not an inward and saving acquaintance with them. We may have a traditional cognizance of the same, but not an experiential and affecting realization of them in the soul. Nor is it possible for us to acquire the latter by any industry of our own. Unregenerate persons may, like the Jews of old, have a theory of these things in their heads, so that they can discourse upon and discuss the same, and yet be totally lacking the power of godliness in their affections, so that their character and conduct are radically influenced thereby. Before we can have a spiritual knowledge of divine things, we must, by a miracle of God’s grace and power, be made spiritual persons. Before we are capacitated to discern spiritual things, the veil must be removed from our understanding and we conducted into the light. Spiritual things are disclosed to us and not discovered by us.

First, *God revealed*. God is immutable, incorporeal, pure spirit, and therefore, invisible. He is infinite in His being, and therefore, incomprehensible to the finite creature. He is exalted so high above all, that none by searching can find Him out. In order to be known, He must reveal Himself. This He has been pleased to do in the works of His hands. The existence of the universe proclaims Him. Creation evinces the Creator. The heavens declare His glory and the firmament shows His handiwork. “The invisible things of him [His own perfections] from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by

the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse" (Rom 1:20) for their unbelief and atheism. It is because the productions of divine wisdom receive not the thoughtful attention which they call for that men are so little affected and awed by them. We need to heed that exhortation, "Stand still, and consider the wondrous works of God" (Job 37:14). If we duly examine the marvellous mechanism of our own bodies, we should be humbled and bowed in adoration before their Author, saying, "I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psa 139:14). God is revealed *in* man, for his conscience bears witness that he is accountable to Him. Yet sin has so blinded the human mind that God is a complete stranger to the natural man, and after four thousand years of human history, it had to be recorded, "The world by wisdom knew not God" (1Co 1:21).

Second, *God revealed in and by Christ*. "The word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." The One who had been with God from everlasting, who was Himself God, took upon Him our humanity, and became the visible "image of the invisible God" (Col 1:15). By means of the divine incarnation, the infinite became finite, the incorporeal tangible, the incomprehensible cognizable. The One born at Bethlehem was none other than "Immanuel...God with us." He ceased not to be all that He was previously, but was now clothed with flesh and blood. As the Word, He made God known in audible terms, "I am Alpha and Omega," He declared (Rev 1:8), spelling out God in human language. As a "word" makes unseen thought objective and apparent, so Christ was "God manifest in flesh" (1Ti 3:16). He has exhibited the attributes of God, displayed His ineffable character, unveiled His heart, so perfectly, that He could say, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (Joh 14:9). It is in and by Him that we may obtain a fuller knowledge of deity, for "The light of the knowledge of the glory of God" shines "in the face of Jesus Christ" (2Co 4:6). In His life of impeccable purity, we behold God's holiness—in His utter selflessness, God's benevolence—in His peerless teaching, God's wisdom—in His unrivalled miracles, God's power—in His gentleness and meekness, God's patience—in His love and grace, the outshining of His glory.

Third, *Christ is revealed objectively in the Gospel* for faith's acceptance. That salvation of which the prophets inquired and searched diligently, and which the angels desired to look into, is now openly proclaimed. Therein are the glorious perfections of the Redeemer's person, His official relations, His mediatorial work, all that He did for lost sinners, freely proclaimed. Blessed is it to be informed that God's so great salvation, "At the first began to be spoken by the Lord," and that it has been confirmed to us by those who actually heard Him (Heb 2:3). In other words, the triune God valued the Gospel so highly that He revealed it first to and by His incarnate Son, for in all things He must have the pre-eminence. Of such vital and vast importance is the Gospel that the whole of the first New Testament epistle is devoted to a doctrinal exposition and practical application of it—as its opening verse indicates, for the key is always hung upon the door in the Scriptures. Immediately after the introduction, the thesis of Romans is stated, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth: to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith" (Rom 1:16-17). In the Gospel, a discovery is made of the way of justification, of how those who have broken

the Law may be justly pronounced righteous by God (Rom 3:21-31; 4:3-8, 22, 24; 5:1, 17-18), which is the first great and glorious benefit that the believing sinner receives through Christ, and which is the foundation of all other benefits.

Fourth, *Christ is revealed subjectively by the Spirit*. The Gospel exhibits the manifold wisdom of God, the marvels of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ, the bliss of celestial glory. Yet, plainly as these are published, the Gospel is a “mystery” (1Co 2:7; Col 1:27), and none but the regenerate are acquainted with its secret, which is “Christ *in you* the hope of glory”—to which all the unregenerate are total strangers. Many are well informed as to the contents of the Gospel, who know nothing of its riches and glory—just as a child and a jeweler may both admire a valuable pearl and call it by the same name, yet the former has no real conception of its worth and excellence. One may acquire an accurate idea of the Gospel through hearsay or study, and have but “the form of knowledge” (Rom 2:20), and not an experiential acquaintance therewith—there is a greater difference between the two than there is in seeing the picture of a person and having intimate intercourse with him. Neither learning nor labour can impart a spiritual insight into the things of God. If they are to be effectual unto the saving of the soul, the Holy Spirit must teach us (Joh 14:26). None but He can write God’s Law upon the heart, stamp God’s image upon the soul, and sanctify through the truth. There must be a divine application to the inward man of both the Law and the Gospel if the will is to be moved.

It is the blessed Spirit who convicts the conscience of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, filling it with terror and anguish at its enormity and heinousness. He it is who convinces us of the utter futility of trying to save ourselves, and makes us realize that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rages in the esteem of God. He it is who reveals to the soul the suitability and sufficiency of Christ to meet our dire needs, and communicates faith to lay hold of Him. He it is who forms Christ in us (Gal 4:19), for Christ in the flesh (incarnate), Christ in the Gospel (objectively considered), will profit not unless He be formed in the soul. He teaches the believer many things, but His supreme subject is Christ (Joh 16:14). He presses Christ’s claims upon us, exalts His person, makes Him supremely attractive to the heart. Many things in nature are very beautiful, but when the sun shines on them, we appreciate their splendour all the more. Thus it is when we are enabled to behold Christ by the light of the Spirit’s teaching. There must be not only a knowledge of spiritual things, but a spiritual knowledge of the same. The light which we have of them must be answerable to the things themselves. We must see them in God’s light (Psa 36:9). As the things themselves are spiritual, they must be opened to us by the Spirit.

Fifth, *the divine will revealed*. “The secret things belong unto the LORD our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and to our children for ever, that we may *do* all the words of this law” (Deu 29:29). Instead of obtruding into what God has been pleased to conceal from us, we are to fix our attention upon what He has made known about the obedience He requires from us. His Word is not given to gratify our curiosity, still less to wrangle over, but for the ordering of our lives, to reduce it to practice. Not a few things in God’s counsels and dealings appear to us mysterious, much in prophecy obscure, but the path of duty is clearly marked out. God has kept back nothing that would be profitable to us. All our study of it will be of no avail unless we be “doers of the word” (Jam 1:22).

THE GLORIFIED MEDIATOR

The law had “a shadow of good things to come” (Heb 10:1). A beautiful illustration and exemplification of this is found in the closing verses of Exodus 34, in which we behold Moses descending from the mount with radiant face. The key to our present portion is found in noting the exact position that it occupies in this book of redemption. It comes after the legal covenant which Jehovah had made with Israel. It comes before the actual setting up of the tabernacle and the Shekinah-glory filling it. As we shall see, our passage is interpreted for us in 11 Corinthians 3. What we have here in Exodus 34 supplies both a comparison and a contrast with the new dispensation, the dispensation of the Spirit, of grace, of life more abundant. But before that dispensation was inaugurated, God saw fit that man should be fully tested under Law, and that for the purpose of demonstrating what he is as a fallen and sinful creature.

Man’s trial under the Mosaic economy demonstrated two things. First, that he is “ungodly.” Second, that he is “without strength” (Rom 5:6). But these are negative things. In Romans 8:7, a third feature of man’s terrible state is mentioned, namely, that he is “enmity against God.” This was made manifest when God’s Son became incarnate and tabernacled for thirty-three years on this earth. “He came unto his own, and his own received him not” (Joh 1:11). Not only so, but He was “despised and rejected of men” (Isa 53:3). Nay, more, they hated Him, hated Him “without a cause” (Joh 15:25). Nor would their hatred be appeased till they had condemned Him to a malefactor’s death and nailed Him to the accursed cross. And let it be remembered, that it was not merely the Jews who put to death the Lord of glory, but the Gentiles also. Therefore did the Lord say, when looking forward to His death, “Now is the judgment of this *world*” (Joh 12:31)—not of Israel only. There the probation or testing of man ended.

Man is not now under probation. He is under condemnation. “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one” (Rom 3:10-12). Man is not on trial. He is a culprit under sentence. No pleading will avail. No excuses will be accepted. The present issue between God and the sinner is, Will man bow to God’s righteous verdict?

This is where the gospel meets us. It comes to us as to those who are already “lost,” as to those who are “ungodly,” “without strength,” “enmity against God.” It announces to us the amazing *grace* of God—the only hope for poor sinners. But that grace will not be welcomed until the sinner bows to the sentence of God against him. That is why both repentance and faith are demanded from the sinner. These two must not be separated. Paul preached “Repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ” (Act 20:21). Repentance is the sinner’s acknowledgment of that sentence of condemnation under which

he lies. Faith is the acceptance of the grace and mercy which are extended to him through Christ. Repentance is not the turning over of a new leaf and the vowing that I will mend my ways, rather is it a setting to my seal that God is true when He tells me that I am “*without strength*,” that in myself my case is hopeless, that I am no more able to “do better next time” than I am to create a world. Not until this is really believed (not as the result of my experience, but on the authority of God’s holy Word) shall I really turn to Christ and welcome Him—not as a Helper, but as a *Saviour*.

As it was dispensationally, so it is experimentally. There must be “a ministration of death” (2Co 3:7) before there is a “ministration of spirit” or life (2Co 3:8). There must be “the ministration of condemnation” before “the ministration of righteousness” (2Co 3:9). Ah, a “*ministration of condemnation and death*” falls strangely upon our ears, does it not? A “ministration of *grace*” we can understand, but a “ministration of condemnation” is not so easy to grasp. But this latter was man’s first *need*. It must be shown what he is in himself—a hopeless wreck, utterly incapable of meeting the righteous requirements of a holy God—before he is ready to be a debtor to mercy alone. We repeat. As it was dispensationally, so it is experimentally. It was to this (his own experience) that the apostle Paul referred when he said, “For I was alive without the law once: but when the commandment came, sin revived, and I died” (Rom 7:9). In his unregenerate days, he was, in his own estimation, “alive,” yet it was “*without the law*,” i.e. apart from meeting its demands. “But when the commandment came,” when the Holy Spirit wrought within him, when the Word of God came in power to his heart, then “sin revived,” that is, he was made aware of his awful condition, and then he “died” to his self-righteous complacency. He saw that, in himself, his case was hopeless. Yes, the appearing of the glorified mediator comes not before, but after, the legal covenant.

“And he was there with the LORD forty days and forty nights; he did neither eat bread, nor drink water. And he wrote upon the tables the words of the covenant, the Ten Commandments” (Exo 34:28). Our passage abounds in comparisons and contrasts. The “forty days” here at once recalls to mind the “forty days” mentioned in Matthew 4:2. Here it was Moses. There it was Christ. Here it was Moses on the mount. There it was Christ in the wilderness. Here it was Moses favoured with a glorious revelation from God. There it was Christ being tempted of the Devil. Here it was Moses receiving the Law, at the mouth of JEHOVAH. There it was Christ being assailed by the devil to repudiate that Law. We scarcely know which is the greater wonder of the two—that a sinful worm of the earth was raised to such a height of honour as to be permitted to spend a season in the presence of the great JEHOVAH, or that the Lord of glory should stoop so low as to be for six weeks with the foul fiend.

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (Exo 34:29). Very blessed is it to compare and contrast this second descent of Moses from the mount with that which is before us in the thirty-second chapter. There we see the face of Moses diffused with anger (Exo 32:19). Here he comes down with countenance radiant. There he beheld a people engaged in idolatry, here he returns to a people abashed. There we behold him dashing the tables of stone to the ground (Exo 32:19). Here he deposits them in the ark (Deu 10:5).

“And it came to pass, when Moses came down from mount Sinai with the two tables of testimony in Moses’ hand, when he came down from the mount, that Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone while he talked with him” (Exo 34:29). This also reminds us of a New Testament episode, which is very similar, yet vastly dissimilar. It was on the mount that the face of Moses was made radiant, and it was on the mount that our Lord was transfigured. But the glory of Moses was only a reflected one, whereas that of Christ was inherent. The shining of Moses’ face was the consequence of his being brought into the immediate presence of the glory of JEHOVAH. The transfiguration of Christ was the outshining of His own personal glory. The radiance of Moses was confined to his face, but of Christ we read, “His raiment was white as the light” (Mat 17:2). Moses *knew not* that the skin of his face shone. Christ did, as is evident from His words, “Tell the vision to no man” (Mat 17:9).

This twenty-ninth verse brings out, most blessedly, what is the certain consequence of intimate communion with the Lord, and that in a twofold way. First, no soul can enjoy real fellowship with the all-glorious God without being affected thereby, and that to a marked degree. Moses had been absorbed in the communications received and in contemplating the glory of Him who spoke with him; and his own person caught and retained some of the beams of that glory. So it is still. As we read in Psalm 34:5, “They looked upon Him, and their faces were radiant” (R.V.). It is communion with the Lord that conforms us to His image. We shall not be more Christlike till we walk more frequently and more closely with Him. “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are *changed* into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18).

The second consequence of real communion with God is that we shall be less occupied with our wretched selves. Though the face of Moses shone with “a light not seen on land or sea,” he wist it not. This illustrates a vital difference between self-righteous Pharisaism and true godliness. The former produces complacency and pride, the latter leads to self-abnegation and humility. The Pharisee (and there are many of his tribe still on earth) boasts of his attainments, advertises his imaginary spirituality, and thanks God that he is not as other men. But the one who, by grace, enjoys much fellowship with the Lord learns of Him who was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mat 11:29), and says, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1). Being engaged with the beauty of the Lord, he is delivered from self-occupation, and therefore is unconscious of the very fruit of the Spirit which is being brought forth in him. But though *he* is not aware of his increasing conformity to Christ, *others* are.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of his face shone; and they were afraid to come nigh him” (Exo 34:30). This shows us the third effect of communion with God. Though the individual himself is unconscious of the glory manifested through him, others are cognizant of it. Thus it was when two of Christ’s apostles stood before the Jewish Sanhedrin, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, *that they had been with Jesus*” (Act 4:13). Ah, we cannot keep company very long with the Holy One without His impress being left upon us. The man who is thoroughly devoted to the Lord needs not to wear some badge or button in his coat-

lapel, nor to proclaim with his lips that he is “living a life of victory.” It is still true that actions speak louder than words.

“And when Aaron and all the children of Israel saw Moses, behold, the skin of His face shone; and they were *afraid* to come nigh him” (Exo 34:30). The typical meaning of this is given in 11 Corinthians 3:7, “But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel *could not* stedfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance.” Concerning this, another has said: “Why, then, were they afraid to come near him? Because the very glory that shone upon his face searched their hearts and consciences—being what they were, sinners, and unable of themselves to meet even the smallest requirements of the covenant which had now been inaugurated. It was of necessity a ‘ministration’ of condemnation and death, for it required a righteousness from them which they could not render, and, inasmuch as they must fail in the rendering it, would pronounce their condemnation, and bring them under the penalty of transgression, which was death. The glory which they thus beheld upon the face of Moses was the expression to them of the holiness of God—that holiness which sought from them conformity to its own standards, and which would vindicate the breaches of that covenant which had now been established. They were, therefore, afraid because they knew in their inmost souls that they could not stand before Him from whose presence Moses had come” (Edward Dennett, 1831-1914).

Typically, the covenant which JEHOVAH made with Moses and Israel at Sinai, and the tables of stone on which were engraved the Ten Commandments, foreshadowed that new covenant which He will yet make with Israel in a coming day, “For I will take you from among the heathen, and gather you out of all countries, and will bring you into your own land. Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God” (Eze 36:24-28). “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah....After those days, said the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it *in their hearts*....And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD” (Jer 31:31-34).

Spiritually, this is made good for Christians even now. Under the gracious operations of the Spirit of God, *our hearts* have been made plastic and receptive. It is to this fact that Paul refers at the beginning of 11 Corinthians 3, “The saints at Corinth had been manifested to be Christ’s epistle ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God, not on stone tables, but on fleshy tables of the heart. Their hearts being made impressionable by divine working, Christ could write upon them, using Paul as a pen, and making every mark in the power of the Spirit of God. But what is written is the knowledge of God as revealed through the Mediator in the grace of the new covenant, so that it might be true in the hearts of the saints—‘They shall all know me,’ Then Paul goes

on to speak of himself as made competent by God to be a new covenant ministry, ‘not of the letter, but of the spirit,’” (C. A. Coates, 1862-1945).

“And Moses called unto them; and Aaron and all the rulers of the congregation returned unto him: and Moses talked with them. And afterward all the children of Israel came nigh: and he gave them in commandment all that the LORD had spoken with him in mount Sinai. And till Moses had done speaking with them, he put a vail on his face” (Exo 34:31-33). Ah, does not this explain their fear as they beheld the shining of Moses’ face. Note *what* was in his hands! He carried the two tables of stone on which were written the ten words of the Law, the “ministration of condemnation.” The nearer the light of the glory came, while it was connected with the righteous claims of God upon them, the more cause they had to fear. That holy Law condemned them, for man in the flesh could not meet its claims. “However blessed it was *typically*, it was *literally* a ministry of death, for Moses was not a quickening spirit, nor could he give his spirit to the people, nor could the glory of his face bring them into conformity with himself as the mediator. Hence, the veil had to be on his face” (C. A. Coates).

The dispensational interpretation of this is given in 11 Corinthians 3:13, “And not as Moses, which put a vail over his face, that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look *to the end* of that which is abolished.” Here the apostle is treating of Judaism as an economy. Owing to their blindness spiritually, Israel were unable to discern the deep significance of the ministry of Moses, the purpose of God behind it, that which all the types and shadows pointed forward to. The “*end*” of 11 Corinthians 3:13 is parallel with Romans 10:4, “For Christ is *the end* of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth.” “The veil on Israel’s heart is self-sufficiency, which makes them still refuse to submit to God’s righteousness. But when Israel’s heart turns to the Lord, the veil will be taken away. What a wonderful chapter Exodus 34 will be to them then! For they will see that *Christ* is the spirit of it all! What they will see, we are privileged to see now. All this had an ‘end’ on which *we* can, through infinite grace, fix our eyes. The ‘end’ was the glory of the Lord as the Mediator of the new covenant. He has come out of death and gone up on high, and the glory of all that God is in grace is shining in His face” (C. A. Coates).

“But when Moses went in before the LORD to speak with him, he took the vail off, until he came out. And he came out, and spake unto the children of Israel that which he was commanded. And the children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that the skin of Moses’ face shone: and Moses put the vail upon his face again, until he went in to speak with him” (Exo 34:34-35). Moses unveiled in the presence of the Lord is a beautiful type of the believer of this dispensation. The Christian beholds the glory of God shining in the face of Jesus Christ (2Co 4:6). Therefore, instead of being stricken with fear, he approaches with boldness. God’s law *cannot* condemn him, for its every demand has been fully met and satisfied by his Substitute. Hence, instead of trembling before the glory of God, we “*rejoice* in hope of the glory of God” (Rom 5:2).

“There is no veil now either on *His* face or *our* hearts. He makes those who believe on Him to *live* in the knowledge of God, and in response to God, for He is the quickening Spirit. And He gives His Spirit to those who believe. We have the Spirit of the glorious Man in whose face the glory of God shines. Is it not surpassingly wonderful? One has to ask sometimes, ‘Do we really believe it?’ But we all, looking on the glory of the Lord with

unveiled face, are transformed according to the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Lord the Spirit (2Co 3:18). If we had not His Spirit, we should have no liberty to look on the glory of the Lord, or to see Him as the Spirit of these marvellous types. But we have liberty to look on it all, and there is transforming power in it. Saints under new-covenant ministry are transfigured.

“This is the ‘surpassing glory’ which could not be seen or known until it shone in the face of Him of whom Moses in Exodus 34 is so distinctly a type. The whole typical system was temporary, but its ‘spirit’ abides, for *Christ* was righteousness, and all is abiding. The ministry of the new covenant subsists and abounds in glory” (C. A. Coates).

As a sort of appendix to this article, we shall proffer, for the sake of those who may value it, an outline of the apostle’s argument in 11 Corinthians 3. The authority of Paul’s apostleship had been called into question by certain Judaizers. In the first verses of this chapter, he appeals to the Corinthians themselves as the proof of his God-commissioned and God-blessed ministry. In verse 6, he defines the *character* of his ministry, and this for the purpose of showing its superiority over that of his enemies. He and his fellow gospellers were “ministers of the *new* testament” or covenant. A series of contrasts is then drawn between the two covenants, that is between Judaism and Christianity. That which pertained to the former is called “the letter,” that relating to the new “the spirit”; i.e. the one was mainly concerned with that which was external, the other was largely internal—the one slew, the other gave life—this was one of the leading differences between the Law and the gospel.

In what follows, the apostle, while allowing that the Law was glorious, shows that the gospel is still more glorious. The old covenant was a “ministration of death,” for the Law could only condemn. Therefore, though a glory was connected with it, yet was it such that man in the flesh could not behold (verse 7). Then how much more excellent would be, must be, the glory of the new covenant, seeing that it was “a ministration of the spirit” (verse 8)—compare verse 3 for proof of this. If there was a glory connected with that which “concluded all under sin” (Gal 3:22), much more glorious must be that ministration which announced a righteousness which is “unto all and upon all them that believe” (Rom 3:22). It is more glorious to pardon than to condemn, to give life than to destroy (2Co 3:9). The glory of the former covenant, therefore, pales into nothingness before the latter (2Co 3:10). This is further seen from the fact that Judaism is “done away,” whereas Christianity “remaineth” (2Co 3:11)—compare Hebrews 8:7-8.

At verse 12, the apostle draws still another contrast between the two economies, namely, the plainness or perspicuity over against the obscurity and ambiguity of their respective ministries (2Co 3:12-15). The apostle used “great plainness of speech,” whereas the teaching of the ceremonial law was by means of shadows and symbols. Moreover, the minds of the Israelites were blinded, so that there was a veil over their ears, and therefore, when the writings of Moses were read, they were incapable of looking beyond the type to the Antitype. This veil remains upon them unto this day, and will continue until they turn unto the Lord (2Co 3:15-16). *Literally*, the covenant of Sinai was a ministration of condemnation and death, and the glory of it had to be veiled. But it had an “end” (2Co 3:13), upon which Israel could not fix their eyes. They will see that “end” in a coming day, but in the meantime, *we* are permitted to read the old covenant without a veil, and to see

that *Christ* is the “spirit” of it all, and that it had in view that which could only have its fulfilment under new covenant conditions, namely, God’s glory secured in and by the Mediator.

The language of 11 Corinthians 3:17 is involved in some obscurity, “Now the Lord is that Spirit.” This does not mean that Christ is the Holy Spirit. The “Spirit” here is the same as in 11 Corinthians 3:6—“not of the letter, but of the spirit,” cf. Romans 7:6. The Mosaic system is called “the letter” because it was purely objective. It possessed no inward principle or power. But the gospel deals with the heart, and supplies the spiritual power (Rom 1:16). Moreover, *Christ* is the spirit, the life, the heart and centre of all the ritual and ceremonialism of Judaism. *He* is the key to the Old Testament, for, “In the volume of the book” (Psa 40:7), it is written of Him. So also Christ is the spirit and life of Christianity. He is “a quickening spirit” (1Co 15:45). And “Where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (2Co 3:17). Apart from Christ, the sinner, be he Jew or Gentile, is in a state of bondage. He is the slave of sin and the captive of the devil. But where the Son makes free, He frees indeed (Joh 8:32).

Finally, the apostle contrasts the two *glories*, the glory connected with the old covenant—the shining on Moses’ face at the giving of the Law (when the covenant was made)—with the glory of the new covenant, in the person of Christ. “But we all, with open [unveiled] face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). Note here, first, “we *all*.” Moses alone beheld the glory of the Lord in the mount. Every Christian now beholds it. Second, “with open face,” with freedom and with confidence, whereas Israel were afraid to gaze on the radiant and majestic face of Moses. Third, we are “changed into the same image.” The law had no power to convert or purify, but the ministry of the gospel, under the operation of the Spirit, *has* a transforming power. Those who are saved by it, those who are occupied with Christ, as set forth in the Word (the “mirror”), are, little by little, conformed to His image. Ultimately, when we “see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2), we shall be “like him”—full, perfectly, eternally.

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

6. *The Scriptures and Obedience*

All professing Christians are agreed, in theory at least, that it is the bounden duty of those who bear His name to honour and glorify Christ in this world. But as to *how* this is to be done, as to what He requires from us to this end, there is wide difference of opinion. Many suppose that honouring Christ simply means to join some “church,” take part in and support its various activities. Others think that honouring Christ means to speak of Him to others and be diligently engaged in “personal work.” Others seem to imagine that honouring Christ signifies little more than making liberal financial contributions to His cause. Few indeed realize that Christ is honoured only as we *live holily* unto Him and that

by walking in subjection to His revealed will. Few indeed really believe that word, "Behold, *to obey* is better than sacrifice, and *to hearken* than the fat of rams" (1Sa 15:22).

We are not Christians at all unless we have fully surrendered to and "received Christ Jesus *the Lord*" (Col 2:6). Oh, dear reader, we would plead with you to ponder that statement diligently. Satan is deceiving so many today by leading them to suppose that they are savingly trusting in "the finished work" of Christ while their hearts remain unchanged and self still rules their lives. Listen to God's word, "Salvation is far from the wicked; *for they seek not* thy statutes" (Psa 119:155). Do you really *seek* His "statutes"? Do you diligently search His Word to discover what He has commanded? "He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1Jo 2:4). What could be plainer than that?

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?" (Luk 6:46). Reality in life, not glowing words from the lips, is what Christ requires. What a searching and solemn word is that in James 1:22, "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves"! There are many "hearers" of the Word, regular hearers, reverent hearers, interested hearers, but alas, what they hear is not *incorporated* into the life. It does not regulate their way. And *God* says that they who are not *doers* of the Word are deceiving their own selves!

Alas, how many such there are in Christendom today. They are not downright hypocrites, but deluded. They suppose that, because they are so clear upon salvation by grace alone, *they* are saved. They suppose that, because they sit under the ministry of a man who has "made the Bible a new book" to them, they have grown in grace. They suppose that, because their store of biblical knowledge has increased, they are more spiritual. They suppose that the mere listening to a servant of God or reading his writings is *feeding on* the Word. Not so! We "feed" on the Word only when we personally appropriate, masticate, *and assimilate into our lives* what we hear or read. Where there is not an increasing conformity of heart and life to God's Word, then increased knowledge will only bring increased condemnation! "And that servant, which *knew* his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither *did* according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Luk 12:47).

"Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2Ti 3:7). This is one of the prominent characteristics of the "perilous times" in which we are now living. People hear one preacher after another, attend this conference and that conference, read book after book on biblical subjects, and yet never attain unto a vital and practical acquaintance with the truth, so as to have an impression of its power and efficacy on the soul. There is such a thing as spiritual *dropsy* and multitudes are suffering from it. The more they hear, the more they want to. They drink in sermons and addresses with avidity, but their lives are unchanged. They are puffed up with their knowledge, not humbled into the dust before God. The faith of God's elect is "the acknowledging [in the life] of the truth which is *after godliness*" (Ti 1:1), but to this, the vast majority are total strangers.

God has given us His Word not only with the design of instructing us, but for the purpose of *directing* us—to make known what He requires us to *do*. The first thing we need is a clear and distinct *knowledge* of our duty, and the first thing *God* demands of us is a conscientious *practice* of it, corresponding to our knowledge. "What doth the LORD

require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (Mic 6:8). "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man" (Ecc 12:13). The Lord Jesus affirmed the same thing when He said, "Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you" (Joh 15:14).

1. Now man profits from the Word as he discovers *God's demands upon him*. His undeviating demands, for *He* changes not. It is a great and grievous mistake to suppose that, in this present dispensation, God has *lowered* His demands, for that would necessarily imply that His previous demand was a harsh and unrighteous one. Not so. "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom 7:12). The sum of God's demands is, "Thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might" (Deu 6:5), and the Lord Jesus repeated it in Matthew 22:37. The apostle Paul enforced the same when he wrote, "If any man *love not* the Lord Jesus, let him be *Anathema*" (1Co 16:22).

To proceed a step farther. 2. A man profits from the Word when he discovers how entirely and how sinfully he has *failed to meet* God's demands. And let us point out, for the benefit of any who may take issue with the last paragraph, that no man can see what a sinner he is, how infinitely short he has fallen of measuring up to God's standard, until he has a clear sight of the exalted demands of God upon him! Just in proportion as preachers *lower* God's standard of what He requires from every human being, to that extent will their hearers obtain an inadequate and faulty conception of their sinfulness, and so the less will they perceive their need of an almighty Saviour! But once a soul really perceives *what are* God's demands upon him, and how completely and constantly he has failed to render Him His due, then does he recognize what a desperate situation he is in. The Law must be preached before any are ready for the gospel.

To proceed farther. 3. A man profits from the Word when he is taught therefrom that God, in His infinite grace, has fully *provided for* His people's meeting His own demands. At this point, too, practically all present-day preaching is seriously defective. There is being given forth what may loosely be termed a "half gospel," but which in reality is virtually *a denial* of the true gospel. Christ is brought in, yet only as a sort of make-weight. That Christ has vicariously met every demand of God, upon all who believe upon Him, is blessedly true, yet it is only a part of the truth. The Lord Jesus has not only vicariously satisfied for His people the requirements of God's righteousness, but He has also secured that *they shall personally* satisfy them too. Christ has procured the Holy Spirit to make good in them what the Redeemer wrought for them.

The grand and glorious miracle of salvation is that the saved are *regenerated*. A transforming work is wrought within them. Their understandings are illuminated, their hearts are changed, their wills are renewed. They are made "new creatures in Christ Jesus" (2Co 5:17). God refers to this miracle of grace thus:, "I will put my *laws* into their mind, and write them in their hearts" (Heb 8:10). The heart is now inclined to God's law. A disposition has been communicated to it which *answers* to its demands. There is a sincere desire to perform it. And thus the quickened soul is able to say, "When thou saidst, *Seek ye my face*; my heart said unto thee, thy face, LORD, *will I seek*" (Psa 27:8).

Christ not only rendered a perfect obedience unto the Law for the justification of His believing people, but He also merited for them those supplies of His Spirit which were essential unto their sanctification, and which alone could transform carnal creatures and enable them to render acceptable obedience unto God. Though Christ died for the “ungodly” (Rom 5:6), though He *finds* them ungodly (Rom 4:5) when He justifies them, yet He *leaves them not* in that abominable state. On the contrary, He effectually teaches them, by His Spirit, to *deny* ungodliness and worldly lusts (Ti 2:12). Just as weight cannot be separated from a stone, or heat from fire, so cannot justification and sanctification.

When God really pardons a sinner in the court of his conscience, under the sense of that amazing grace, the heart is purified, the life is rectified, and the whole man is sanctified. Christ “gave himself for us, that he might redeem us *from* all iniquity, and *purify* unto himself a peculiar people [not “careless about” but], zealous of good works” (Ti 2:14). Just as a substance and its properties, causes and their necessary effects, are inseparably connected, so are a saving faith *and* conscientious obedience unto God. Hence, we read of “the obedience *of* faith” (Rom 16:26).

Said the Lord Jesus, “He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, *he it is that loveth me*” (Joh 14:21). Not in the Old Testament, the Gospels or the epistles does God own anyone as a lover of Him save he who keeps *His* commandments. Love is something more than sentiment or emotion. It is a principle of action, and it expresses itself in something more than honeyed expressions, namely, by deeds which please the object loved. “For this is the love of God, that we *keep* his commandments” (1Jo 5:3). Oh, my reader, you are deceiving yourself if you think you love God and yet have no deep desire and make no real effort to walk obediently before Him.

But what is *obedience to God*? It is far more than a mechanical performance of certain duties. I may have been brought up by Christian parents, and under them acquired certain moral habits, and yet my abstaining from taking the Lord’s name in vain, and being guiltless of stealing, may be no *obedience* to the third and eighth commandments. Again, obedience to God is far more than conforming to the conduct of His people. I may board in a home where the Sabbath is strictly observed, and out of respect for them, or because I think it is a good and wise course to rest one day in seven, I may refrain from all unnecessary labour on that day, and yet not keep the fourth commandment at all! Obedience is not only subjection to an external law, but it is the surrendering of my will to the authority of another. Thus, obedience to God is the heart’s recognition of His lordship, of His right to command, and my duty to comply. It is the complete subjection of the soul to the blessed yoke of Christ.

That obedience which God requires can proceed only from a heart which *loves* Him. “Whatsoever ye do, do it *heartily*, as to the Lord” (Col 3:23). That obedience which springs from a dread of punishment is servile. That obedience which is performed in order to procure favours from God is selfish and carnal. But spiritual and acceptable obedience is cheerfully given. It is the heart’s free response to and gratitude for the unmerited regard and love of God for us.

4. Now we profit from the Word when we not only see it is our bounden duty to obey God, but when there is wrought in us *a love for* His commandments. The “blessed” man is the one whose “*delight* is in the law of the LORD” (Psa 1:2). And again, we read, “Blessed

is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments” (Psa 112:1). It affords a real test for our hearts to face honestly the questions, “Do I really value His “commandments” as much as I do His *promises*? Ought I not to do so?” Assuredly, for the one proceed as truly from *His love* as do the other. The heart’s compliance with the voice of Christ is the foundation of all practical holiness.

Here again, we would earnestly and lovingly beg the reader to attend closely to this detail. Any man who supposes that he is saved and yet has no genuine love for God’s commandment is deceiving himself. Said the Psalmist, “O how love I thy law!” (Psa 119:97). And again, “Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold” (Psa 119:127). Should someone object that *that* was under the Old Testament, we ask, “Do you intimate that the Holy Spirit produces *less* a change in the hearts of those whom He now regenerates than He did of old?” But a New Testament saint also placed on record, “I *delight* in the law of God after the inward man” (Rom 7:22). And, my reader, unless *your* heart *delights* in the “law of God” there is something radically wrong with you. Yea, it is greatly to be feared that you are spiritually dead.

5. A man profits from the Word when his heart and will are yielded to *all* God’s commandments. Partial obedience is no obedience at all. A holy mind declines whatsoever God forbids, and chooses to practise all He requires, without any exception. If our minds submit not unto God in all His commandments, we submit not to *His* authority in anything He enjoins. If we do not approve of our duty in its *full* extent, we are greatly mistaken if we imagine that we have any *liking* unto *any* part of it. A person who has no principle of holiness in him may yet be disinclined to many vices and be pleased to practise many virtues, as he perceives the former are unfit actions and the latter are, in themselves, comely actions, but his disapprobation of vice and approbation of virtue arise not from any disposition to *submit to the will of God*.

True spiritual obedience is *impartial*. A renewed heart does not pick and choose from God’s commandments. The man who does so is not performing *God’s* will, but his own! Make no mistake upon this point, if we do not sincerely desire to please God in *all* things, then we do not truly wish to do so in anything. Self must be denied, not merely some of the things which may be craved, but self itself! A willful allowance of *any* known sin breaks the whole law (Jam 2:10-11). “Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments” (Psa 119:6). Said the Lord Jesus, “Ye are my friends, if ye do *whatsoever* I command you” (Joh 15:14). If I am not His friend, than I must be His *enemy*, for there is no other alternative—see Luke 19:27.

6. We profit from the Word when the soul is moved to *pray earnestly for enabling grace*. In regeneration, the Holy Spirit communicates a nature which is fitted for obedience according to the Word. The heart has been won by God. There is now a deep and sincere desire to please Him. But the new nature possesses no inherent power, and the old nature or “flesh” strives against it, and the devil opposes. Thus, the Christian exclaims, “For to will *is* present with me: but how to *perform* that which is good I find not” (Rom 7:18). This does not mean that he is the slave of sin, as he was before conversion, but it means that he finds not how *fully* to realize his spiritual aspirations. Therefore does he pray, “*Make me to go* in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight” (Psa 119:35). And again,

“Order my steps in thy word, and let not any iniquity have dominion over me” (Psa 119:133).

Here we would reply to a question which the above paragraphs have probably raised in many minds. Are you affirming that God requires *perfect* obedience from us in this life? We answer, Yes, God will not set any lower standard before us than that (see 1 Peter 1:15). Then, does the real Christian measure up to that standard? Yes and no. Yes, *in his heart*, and it is at *that* which God looks (1Sa 16:7). In his heart, every regenerated person has a real love for God’s commandments, and genuinely *desires* to keep all of them completely. It is in *this* sense, and this alone, that the Christian is experimentally “perfect.” The word “perfect,” both in the Old Testament (Job 1:1 and Psalm 37:37) and in the New Testament (Phi 3:15), means upright, sincere, in contrast with hypocritical.

“LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble” (Psa 10:17). The “desires” of the saint are the language of his soul, and the promise is, “He will fulfill the desire of them that fear Him” (Psa 145:19). The Christian’s desire is to obey God in all things, to be completely conformed to the image of Christ. But this will only be realized in the resurrection. Meanwhile, God, for Christ’s sake, graciously accepts the will for the deed (1Pe2:5). He knows our hearts and sees in His child a genuine love for and a sincere desire *to keep* all His commandments, and accepts the fervent longing and cordial endeavour in lieu of an exact performance (2Co 8:12). But let none who are living in willful disobedience draw false peace and pervert to their own destruction what has just been said for the comfort of those who *are* heartily desirous of seeking to please God in all the details of their lives.

If any ask, “How am I to know that *my* ‘desires’ are really those of a regenerate soul?” We answer, “Saving grace is the communication to the heart of an habitual *disposition unto* holy acts.” The “desires” of the reader are to be tested thus, Are they constant and continuous, or only by fits and starts? Are they earnest and serious, so that you really hunger and thirst after righteousness” (Mat 5:6) and pant “after God” (Psa 42:1)? Are they operative and efficacious? Many desire to escape from hell, yet their desires are not sufficiently strong to bring them to hate and turn from that which must inevitably bring them to hell, namely, willfully sinning against God. Many desire to go to heaven, but not so that they enter upon and follow that “narrow way” which alone leads thereto. True spiritual “desires” *use* the means of grace and spare no pains to realize them, and continue prayerfully pressing forward unto the mark set before them.

7. We profit from the Word when we are, even now, *enjoying the reward of* obedience. “Godliness is profitable unto all things” (1Ti 4:8). By obedience, we purify our souls (1Pe 1:22). By obedience, we obtain the ear of God (1Jo 3:22), as disobedience is a barrier to our prayers (Isa 59:2; Jer 5:25). By obedience, we obtain precious and intimate manifestations of Christ unto the soul (Joh 14:21). As we tread the path of wisdom (complete subjection to God), we discover that “her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace” (Pro 3:17). “His commandments are *not* grievous” (1Jo 5:3), and “in keeping of them there is great reward” (Psa 19:11).

THE CONDESCENSION OF CHRIST

Part 2

In this article, we propose to continue our exposition of Philippians 2:6-7. Our reason for doing so is twofold. First, the vital importance of what is there revealed. A right understanding of that passage is essential if we are to interpret it so as to honour the person of Christ. In order to do this, there must be a correct apprehension of the precise character of our Lord's condescension, wherein it did not and wherein it did consist. A mistake at this point inevitably produces a concept which is derogatory to His glory. Second, we are constrained to continue our contemplation of this wondrous and blessed subject because such awful errors upon it have been vigorously propagated during the last two or three generations, mainly under what is known as the "Kenosis theory." As far as possible, we shall avoid technicalities.

"Who, being in the form of God" (Phi 2:6). The verb which is here used proves that it is no transient thing which is in view. The Son subsists in "the form of God" eternally. The same construction is found in John 1:18, "the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him"—words denoting the Son's unique relation to the Father, the verb again affirming an *abiding* relationship. It is *not* that He "was" in the bosom of the Father, and left it, but that He is *there always* in that intimate filial relationship. Incarnation did not change this, though on earth He still subsisted in heaven—"who is" in John 3:13, is the same Greek verb.

"Thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phi 2:6). This was His personal right as the eternal Son—oneness in authority and dominion, oneness in lordship and dignity, was that to which JEHOVAH'S "fellow" (Zec 13:7) was justly entitled. Thus, by combining the two expressions, we learn that the "form of God" has reference to the divine essence as *clothed with* glory and majesty. As the "form of a servant," in the next verse, was no mere phantasm, but a subjective and objective reality, so Christ's being in "the form of God" denotes that He was from all eternity true God, adorned with divine splendour and majesty.

"But [or "nevertheless," as in Romans 5:14] made himself of no reputation" (Phi 2:7). In the light of what immediately follows, these words also fix to a certainty the force of the terms used at the close of verse 6, proving that Christ was *really* "equal with God." Had that *not* been the case, had the Son been in His own essential person in any way inferior to the Father, then, it had been *no* act of self-abnegation in declining to *display* for a time that equality, nor could what He did have been set before us as an example (Phi 2:5). It would be a strange recommendation of lowliness to say that a mere creature (no matter how high in the scale of being) grasped not at "equality with God"!

"But made himself of no reputation" (Phi 2:7), or "but himself emptied." What is meant by this is clearly signified in what immediately follows. He laid aside the robes of

His incomprehensible glory, divested Himself of His incommunicable honours. In other words, when He entered upon His mediatorial state, instead of acting in the grand capacity of a universal sovereign, He “took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:7). And even *this* “form” was not like unto that of those ministering spirits whose very duty is dignity itself; but, stooping far below the nature of angels, He assumed a body of animated dust, and was “made in the likeness of men”—after the similitude of those inferior and depraved creatures who had revolted against God. Wondrous, amazing condescension was this!

To understand by “made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7), that He “emptied himself of his divine attributes” is horrible blasphemy. In such a case, He would not have been “*God* manifest in flesh” (1Ti 3:16). How the Spirit has anticipated and refuted this error by affirming that the virgin’s Son should be called, “Immanuel...*God* with us” (Mat 1:23)! Nor is it correct to say that He suspended “the exercise of His inherent omnipotence and omniscience.” For a careful reading of the four Gospels reveals the fact that every essential attribute of Deity was evidenced by the Lord Jesus Christ during the days of His humiliation. That, in two or three passages, some of His miraculous works are attributed to the Spirit and some to the Father, no more proves that they were not wrought by His *own* divine power than His resurrection being ascribed to the Father and the Spirit disproves John 10:18! Instead, we behold a blessed co-operation and fellowship of the eternal Three!

If all the remaining terms of this passage (Phi 2:5-11) be properly weighed, there should be no difficulty in arriving at the right understanding of the “made himself of no reputation.” For example, notice the one thing emphasized in verse 8. It is not that He became either “feeble” or “fallible,” but “obedient”—*that* required neither the relinquishing nor the suspending of His omnipotence and omniscience, but it did require the abnegation of dominion and sovereignty! Again, does not the particular character of His *reward* intimate the nature of His “emptying”? God’s response to the Son’s perfect obedience is seen in two things—the *position* accorded Him, and all creatures yet owning Him as “Lord.”

“But made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7). This was in order to His becoming “a servant,” but *that* did not in any wise necessitate or require either the “emptying” or “suspending” of His divine wisdom or power. From being Lord of all, He descended to the place of obedience, though He still remained the “Lord of glory,” as 1 Corinthians 2:8 clearly proves, yet His *external* habit and appearance was that of “a man of sorrows.” In His person, He remained *all* that He was previously, but in the new position He entered, His glory was outwardly obscured. He entered the sphere of servitude, yet without the slightest injury to His Godhead.

He “made himself of no reputation” (Phi 2:7) *must* be understood relatively and not absolutely. The Son could not part with His essential perfections. “Neither by any thing that He did, nor any thing that He suffered, nor any condition He underwent, did He really forgo, nor was it possible that He should do so, any thing of His divine glory. He was no less Son when He died, than when He was declared to be the Son of God with power, by the resurrection from the dead” (John Owen, 1616-1683). If it still be replied that He emptied Himself of His divine glory, we answer, In these two senses only—with respect to His infinite condescension in the *position* which He took, and with respect to the *manifestation* of Himself here in this world.

It was in the taking *upon* Him of “the form of a *servant*” (Phi 2:7) that His unparalleled condescension consisted. It was in *that* that He “made himself of no reputation.” Thus, in comparison with the *positional* glory which he had in “the *form* of God,” wherein He was “equal with God,” He “emptied” Himself. The Word’s becoming “flesh” was unspeakable, inconceivable condescension. Moreover, it is to be steadily borne in mind that in becoming flesh, He did not immediately take to heaven that human nature which He had assumed, but first became a *servant* in it, a “servant” to God, to do His will, and that in the most difficult service that was ever performed in this world. In that service, too, He “made himself of no reputation.” The work He did was stupendous and honourable, but the manner in which it was accomplished exposed Him to the scorn of the world.

Moreover, in that servant-work which the Son of God performed, He not only subjected Himself to the will of God, but He did so to the fullest possible degree. He “became obedient unto death” (Phi 2:8). Had He only become man, and as God-man had sat on the throne governing the world, *that* had been infinite condescension. And had He, as the God-man, *served* at all, that had been amazing self-abnegation. But that He did not stop short of this—that He did not ascend to heaven from the mount of transfiguration, that He should actually enter the portals of *death* itself, ought truly to fill us with deep admiration and wonderment.

Finally, that He, the Prince and Author of life, should not only become “obedient unto death” but that He should die “the death *of the cross*” (Phi 2:8) ought indeed completely to overwhelm our hearts, and bring us to His feet as adoring worshippers. When we try to think of *what* that “death of the cross” was in itself—the Holy One of God nailed to a felon’s gibbet, the Lord of glory stripped naked, exposed to the contempt of a jeering crowd, the true light now opposed by “the power of darkness” (Eph 6:12), the One who is “God blessed for ever” (Rom 9:5) now “made a curse” (Gal 3:13), the sword of divine justice smiting Him, the full penalty of His people’s sins being exacted of Him—ah, the apprehension of this (however feeble), my fellow Christians, must indeed fill us with “wonder, love, and praise.” In all these things did the Beloved of the Father lay aside the privilege of His infinite dignity.

The *manifestation* of His essential and personal glory was indeed eclipsed while the Son tabernacled for thirty-three years in this dark world. His perfect equality with God was hidden by the veil of flesh which He had taken upon Him. Therefore, as He was on the eve of completely accomplishing the work which had been committed to Him, He prayed, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory [His *displayed lordship*] which I had with thee before the world was” (Joh 17:5)—let that visible outshining of My personal dignity, which has been concealed by My abasement, wherein I descended for the suffering of death, be again conspicuously displayed. The Father’s response to this is seen in Philippians 2:9-10, which will come before us (D.V.) in a later paper.

SAVING FAITH

2. *Its Nature*

“There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness” (Pro 30:12). A great many suppose that such a verse as this applies only to those who are trusting in something other than Christ for their acceptance before God, such as people who are relying upon baptism, church membership or their own moral and religious performances. But it is a great mistake to limit such Scriptures unto the class just mentioned. Such a verse as, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death,” (Pro 14:12) has a far wider application than merely to those who are resting on something of or from themselves to secure a title to everlasting bliss. Equally wrong is it to imagine that the only *deceived* souls are they who have no faith in Christ.

There is in Christendom today a very large number of people who have been taught that nothing the sinner can do will ever merit the esteem of God. They have been informed, and rightly so, that the highest moral achievements of the natural man are only “filthy rags” (Isa 64:6) in the sight of the thrice holy God. They have heard quoted so often such passages as, “By grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast” (Eph 2:8-9), and “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us” (Ti 3:5), that they have become thoroughly convinced that heaven cannot be attained by any doing of the creature. Further, they have been told so often that *Christ alone* can save any sinner that this has become a settled article in their creed, from which neither man nor devil can shake them. So far, so good.

That large company to whom we are now referring have also been taught that, while Christ is the only way unto the Father, yet He becomes so only as faith is personally exercised in and upon Him, that He becomes our Saviour only when we believe on Him. During the last twenty-five years, almost the whole emphasis of “Gospel preaching” has been thrown upon faith in Christ, and evangelistic efforts have been almost entirely confined to getting people to “believe” on the Lord Jesus. Apparently there has been great success. Thousands upon thousands have responded—have, as they suppose, accepted Christ as their own personal Saviour. Yet we wish to point out here that it is as serious an error to suppose that all who “believe in Christ” are saved as it is to conclude that only those are deceived (and are described in Proverbs 14:12 and 30:12) who have no faith in Christ.

No one can read the New Testament attentively without discovering that there *is* a “believing” in Christ *which does not save*. In John 8:30, we are told, “As he spake these words, many *believed* on him.” Mark carefully, it is not said “many believe *in* him.” But “many believed *on* him.” Nevertheless, one does not have to read much farther on in the

chapter to discover that those very people were unregenerate and unsaved souls. In John 8:44, we find the Lord telling these very “believers” that *they* were of their father the devil, and in John 8:59, we find them taking up stones to cast at Him. This has presented a difficulty unto some, yet it ought not. They created their own difficulty, by supposing that faith in Christ necessarily saves. It does not. There *is* a faith in Christ which saves, and there is also a faith in Christ which *does not* save.

“Among the chief rulers also many *believed on him*” (Joh 12:42). Were, then, those men saved? Many preachers and evangelists, as well as tens of thousands of their blinded dupes, would answer, “Most assuredly.” But let us note what immediately follows here, “but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God” (Joh 12:42-43). Will any of our readers now say that those men were *saved*? If so, it is clear proof that you are utter strangers to any saving work of God in your own souls. Men who are afraid to hazard for Christ’s sake the loss of their worldly positions, temporal interests, personal reputations, or anything else that is dear to them, are yet in their sins—no matter how they may be trusting in Christ’s finished work to take them to heaven.

Probably most of our readers have been brought up under the teaching that there are only two classes of people in this world, believers and unbelievers. But such a classification is most misleading and is utterly erroneous. God’s Word divides earth’s inhabitants into *three* classes, “Give none offence, neither to [1] the Jews, nor [2] to the Gentiles, nor [3] to the church of God” (1Co 10:32). It was so during Old Testament times, more noticeably so from the days of Moses onwards. There were first the “Gentile” or heathen nations, outside the commonwealth of Israel, which formed by far the largest class. Corresponding with that class, today, are the countless millions of modern heathen, who are “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.” Second, there was the nation of Israel, which has to be subdivided into two groups, for, as Romans 9:6 declares, “They are *not* all Israel, which are of Israel.” By far the larger portion of the nation of Israel were only the nominal people of God, in outward relation to Him. Corresponding with this class is the great mass of professors bearing the name of Christ. Third, there was the spiritual remnant of Israel, whose calling, hope and inheritance were heavenly. Corresponding to them this day are the genuine Christians, God’s “*little flock*” (Luk 12:32).

The same threefold division among men is plainly discernible throughout John’s Gospel. First, there were the hardened leaders of the nation, the scribes and Pharisees, priests and elders. From start to finish, they were openly opposed to Christ, and neither His blessed teaching nor His wondrous works had any melting effects upon them. Second, there were the common people who “heard him gladly” (Mar 12:37), a great many of whom are said to have “believed on him” (see Joh 2:23; 7:31; 8:30; 10:42; 12:44; 12:11), but concerning whom there is nothing to show that they were saved. They were not outwardly opposed to Christ, but they never yielded their hearts to Him. They were impressed by His divine credentials, yet were easily offended (Joh 6:66). Third, there was the insignificant handful who “received him” (Joh 1:12) into their hearts and lives, received Him as their Lord and Saviour.

The same three classes are clearly discernible (to anointed eyes) in the world today. First, there are the vast multitudes who make no profession at all, who see nothing in

Christ that they should desire Him. People who are deaf to every appeal and who make little attempt to conceal their hatred of the Lord Jesus. Second, there is that large company who are attracted by Christ in a natural way. So far from being openly antagonistic to Him and His cause, they are found among His followers. Having been taught much of the truth, they “believe in Christ,” just as children reared by conscientious Mohammedans believe firmly and devoutly in Mohammed. Having received much of instruction concerning the virtues of Christ’s precious blood, they trust in its merits to deliver them from the wrath to come, and yet there is nothing in their daily lives to show that they are *new* creatures in Christ Jesus! Third, there are the “few” (Mat 7:13-14) who deny themselves, take up the cross daily, and follow a despised and rejected Christ in the path of loving and unreserved obedience unto God.

Yes, there is a faith in Christ which saves, but there is a faith in Christ which does not save. From this statement probably few will dissent, yet many will be inclined to weaken it by saying that the faith in Christ which does not save is merely a historical faith, or where there is a believing *about* Christ instead of a believing *in* Him. Not so. That there are those who mistake a historical faith about Christ for a saving faith in Christ we do not deny. But what we would here emphasize is the solemn fact that there are *also* some who have *more* than a historical faith, more than a mere head-knowledge about Him, who yet have a faith which comes short of being a quickening and saving one. Not only are there some with this non-saving faith, but today there are vast numbers of such all around us. They are people who furnish the antitypes of those to which we called attention in the last article—who were represented and illustrated in Old Testament times by those who believed in, rested on, leaned upon, relied upon the Lord, but who were, nevertheless, unsaved souls.

What, then, does saving faith consist of? In seeking to answer this question, our present object is to supply not only a scriptural definition, but one which, at the same time, differentiates it from a non-saving faith. Nor is this any easy task, for the two things often have much in common. That faith in Christ which does not save has in it more than one element or ingredient of that faith which *does* vitally unite the soul to Him. Those pitfalls which the writer must now seek to avoid are undue discouraging of real saints, on the one hand, by raising the standard higher than Scripture has raised it, and encouraging unregenerate professors, on the other hand, by so lowering the standard as to include them. We do not wish to withhold from the people of God their legitimate portion, nor do we want to commit the sin of taking the children’s bread and casting it to the dogs. May the Holy Spirit Himself deign to guide us into the truth.

Much error would be avoided on this subject if due care were taken to frame a scriptural definition of *unbelief*. Again and again in Scripture, we find believing and not believing placed in antithesis, and we are afforded much help toward arriving at a correct conception of the real nature of saving faith when we obtain a right understanding of the character of unbelief. It will at once be discovered that saving faith is far more than a hearty assenting unto what God’s Word sets before us, when we perceive that unbelief is much more than an error of judgment or a failure to assent unto the truth. Scripture depicts unbelief as a virulent and violent *principle of opposition to God*. Unbelief has both a passive and active, a negative and positive side, and therefore, the Greek noun is rendered both by “unbelief” (Rom 11:20; Heb 4:6, 11), and “disobedience” (Eph 2:2; 5:6) and the

verb by “believed not” (Heb 3:18; 11:31) and “obey not” (1Pe 3:1; 4:17). A few concrete examples will make this plainer.

Take first the case of Adam. There was something more than a mere negative failing to believe God’s solemn threat that, in the day he should eat of the forbidden fruit, he would surely die—by one man’s *disobedience* many were made sinners (Rom 5:12). Nor did the heinousness of our first parent’s sin consist in listening to the lie of the serpent, for 1 Timothy 2:14 expressly declares, “Adam *was not* deceived.” No, he was determined to have his own way, no matter what God had prohibited and threatened. Thus, the very first case of unbelief in human history consisted not only in negatively failing to take to heart what God has so clearly and so solemnly said, but also in a deliberate defiance of and rebellion against Him.

Take the case of Israel in the wilderness. Concerning them it is said, “They could not enter in [the promised land] because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19). Now, exactly what do those words signify? Do they mean that Canaan was missed by them because of their failure to appropriate the promise of God? Yes, for a “promise” of entering in was “left” them, but it was not “mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:1-2)—God had declared that the seed of Abraham should inherit that land which flowed with milk and honey, and it was the privilege of that generation which was delivered from Egypt to lay hold of and apply that promise to themselves. But they did not. Yet that is not all! There was something far worse. There was another element in their unbelief which is usually lost sight of nowadays—they were openly disobedient against God. When the spies brought back a sample of the goodly grapes, and Joshua urged them to go up and possess the land, they would not. Accordingly, Moses declared, “Notwithstanding ye would not go up, but *rebelled* against the commandment of the LORD your God” (Deu 1:26). Ah, *there* is the positive side of their unbelief. They were self-willed, disobedient, defiant.

Consider now the case of that generation of Israel which was in Palestine when the Lord Jesus appeared among them as “a minister of the circumcision for the truth of God” (Rom 15:8). John 1:11 informs us, “He came unto his own, and his own received him not,” which the next verse defines as “they believed” Him not. But is that all? Were they guilty of nothing more than a failure to assent to His teaching and trust to His person? Nay, verily, that was merely the *negative* side of their unbelief? Positively, they “hated” Him (Joh 15:25), and would “not come to” Him (Joh 5:40). His holy demands suited not their fleshly desires, and therefore, they said, “We will not have this man to reign over us” (Luk 19:14). Thus, their unbelief, too, consisted in the spirit of self-will and open defiance, a determination to please themselves at all costs.

Unbelief is not simply an infirmity of fallen human nature, it is a heinous crime. Scripture everywhere attributes it to love of sin, obstinacy of will, hardness of heart. Unbelief has its root in a depraved nature, in a mind which is enmity against God. Love of sin is the immediate cause of unbelief, “And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil” (Joh 3:19). “The light of the Gospel is brought unto a place or people. They come so near it as to discover its end or tendency, but as soon as they find that it aims to part them and their sins, they will have no more to do with it. They like not the terms of the Gospel, and

so perish in and for their iniquities” (John Owen). If the *Gospel* were more clearly and faithfully preached, fewer would profess to believe it!

Saving faith, then, is the opposite of damning belief. Both issue from the heart that is alienated from God, which is in a state of rebellion against Him—saving faith from a heart which is reconciled to Him and so has ceased to fight against Him. Thus, an essential element or ingredient in saving faith is a yielding to the authority of God, a submitting of myself to His rule. It is very much more than my understanding assenting and my will consenting to the fact that Christ is a Saviour for sinners, and that He stands ready to receive all who trust Him. To be received by Christ, I must not only come to Him renouncing all my own righteousness (Rom 10:3), as an empty-handed beggar (Mat 19:21), but I must also forsake my self-will and rebellion against Him (Psa 32:3-5; Pro 28:13). Should an insurrectionist and seditionist come to an earthly king seeking his sovereign favour and pardon, then, obviously, the very law of his coming to him for forgiveness requires that he should come on his knees, laying aside his hostility. So it is with a sinner who really comes savingly to Christ for pardon. It is against the law of faith to do otherwise.

Saving faith is a genuine *coming to Christ* (Mat 11:28; Joh 6:37; etc.). But let us take care that we do not miss the clear and inevitable implication of this term. If I say, “I *come* to the U.S.A.” then I necessarily indicate that I *left* some other country to get here. Thus it is in “coming” to Christ. Something has to be left. Coming to Christ not only involves the abandoning of every false object of confidence, it also includes and entails the forsaking of all other competitors for my heart. “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now *returned* unto the shepherd and bishop of your *souls*” (1Pe 2:25). And what is meant by, “Ye *were* [note the past tense—they are no longer doing so] as sheep going *astray*”? (Isa 53:6 tells us, “All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to *his own way*.”) Ah, *that* is what must be forsaken before we can truly “come” to Christ—that course of self-will must be abandoned. The prodigal son could not *come* to his father while he remained in the far country. Dear reader, if you are still following a course of self-pleasing, you are only deceiving yourself if you think you have come to Christ.

Nor is the brief definition, which we have given above of what it means really to “come” to Christ, any forced or novel one of our own. In his book, *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*, John Bunyan (1628-1688) wrote, “Coming to Christ is attended with an honest and sincere forsaking all for Him [here he quotes Luke 14:26-27]. By these and like expressions elsewhere, Christ describeth the true comer. He is one that casteth all behind his back. There are a great many pretended comers to Jesus Christ in the world. They are much like the man you read of in Matthew 21:30, that said to his father’s bidding, ‘I go, sir: and went not.’ When Christ calls by His Gospel, they say, ‘I come, Sir,’ but they still abide by their pleasure and carnal delight.” C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), in his sermon on John 6:44, said, “Coming to Christ embraces in it repentance, self-abnegation, and faith in the Lord Jesus, and so sums within itself all those things which are the necessary attendants of those great steps of heart, such as the belief of the truth, earnest prayers to God, the submission of the soul to the precepts of His Gospel.” In his sermon on John 6:37, he says, “To come to Christ signifies to turn from sin and to trust in Him. Coming to

Christ is a leaving of all false confidences, a renouncing of all love to sin, and a looking to Jesus as the solitary pillar of our confidence and hope.”

Saving faith consists of the complete surrender of my whole being and life to the claims of God upon me, “But first gave their own selves to the Lord” (2Co 8:5).

It is the unreserved acceptance of Christ as my absolute Lord, bowing to His will and receiving His yoke. Possibly someone may object, “Then why are Christians exhorted as they are in Romans 12:1?” We answer, All such exhortations are simply a calling on them to *continue as they began*, “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col 2:6). Yes, mark it well that Christ is “received” as *Lord*. Oh, how far, far below the New Testament standard is this modern way of begging sinners to receive Christ as their own personal “Saviour.” If the reader will consult his concordance, he will find that in *every passage*, where the two titles are found together, it is *always* “Lord and Saviour, and never vice versa. See Luke 1:46-47; 11 Peter 1:11; 2:20; 3:18.

Until the ungodly are sensible of the exceeding sinfulness of their vile course of self-will and self-pleasing, until they are genuinely broken down and penitent over it before God, until they are willing to forsake the world for Christ, until they have resolved to come under His government, for such to depend upon Him for pardon and life is not faith, but blatant presumption. It is but to add insult to injury. And for any such to take His holy name upon their polluted lips, and profess to be His followers, is the most terrible blasphemy, and comes perilously nigh to committing that sin for which there is no forgiveness. Alas, alas, that modern evangelism is encouraging and producing just such hideous and Christ-dishonouring monstrosities.

Saving faith is a believing on Christ with the *heart*, “If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom 10:9-10). There is no such thing as a saving *faith* in Christ where there is no real *love* for Him, and by “real love” we mean a love which is evidenced by *obedience*. Christ acknowledges none to be His friends save those who do whatsoever He commands them (Joh 15:14). As unbelief is a species of rebellion, so saving faith is a complete subjection to God. Hence, we read of “the obedience of faith” (Rom 16:26). Saving faith is to the soul what health is to the body. It is a mighty principle of operation, full of life, ever working, bringing forth fruit after its own kind.

FOLLOWING CHRIST

“He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (Joh 8:12). How easy it is to *read* these words, but how difficult it is to put them truly into practice! It is much, very much, to be thankful for if the Holy Spirit has wrought a real desire in the heart of the reader *to* “follow” Christ, for such a desire surely cannot be within multitudes of those who bear His name and with their lips sing His praises. Daily does the

Christian need to beseech God to *strengthen* this desire until it actually becomes the uppermost longing of his soul and the dominant purpose of his life.

It is much, very much, to be thankful for when the Holy Spirit makes us to realize that, of ourselves, we are *unable* to carry out that desire *and* “follow” Christ. As He Himself tells us, “Without *me* ye can do nothing” (Joh 15:5). This fact ought deeply to humble us as we are made to feel our inability to do that which is right, and should for ever remove all pride and boasting from us. We are apt to think that this inability is merely a “weakness” or lack of strength. But in reality, it is *sin* within us, the “flesh,” that awful and depraved nature with which we were born into this world.

“The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be” (Rom 8:7). While that “enmity” receives its death-blow at regeneration, it is not altogether dead in the Christian. At times, the remainder of this “enmity” slumbers, and Satan seeks to delude us into thinking it is completely slain, thus taking us off our guard. No, the “flesh” remains in us to the end of our earthly course, and its unchanging tendency is to draw us away *from* “following” Christ. How this should make us “abhor” ourselves (Job 42:6), that there is that in us, that which is part and parcel of our very being, which is *opposed* to Christ!

Now, to “follow” Christ is to *take* His “yoke” upon us (Mat 11:29). It is to enlist under the banner of the “Captain” of our salvation. It is to yield completely to His lordship. It is to obey His commandments, and thus truly *serve* Him. It is to seek and do only those things which are pleasing in His sight. For this, divine strength is needed. “*Draw me*” (Song 1:4) must be our daily prayer. Only as we “receive” from *His* fullness (Joh 1:16) are we enabled to follow “the example” which He has left us.

As we *are* thus enabled to “follow” Him, we shall “not walk in darkness” (1Jo 1:6). No, we shall be in fellowship with Him who is “the true light.” Nor must we be dismayed because we do not fully enter into this blessed experience all at once, “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth *more and more* unto the perfect day” (Pro 4:18). The way to get more strength and light is to *use* what has already been given us.

To “follow” Christ is to tread the path of divine blessing. True, it is a narrow path, and oftentimes a lonesome one, for “few” (Mat 7:14) there are who tread it. It is sometimes a rough and thorny path, yet God has provided shoes for our feet (Luk 15:22; Eph 6:15). Yet it is also a most blessed path. It is there we *enjoy* the Lord’s accompanying presence. It is there we are favoured with the rich *compensations* given to those who turn their backs on self-pleasing and the world.

