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“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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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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FAITH AS A MASTICATOR

In the last two issues, we sounded an alarm unto our brethren against the danger of so yielding to the active and hostile principle of unbelief—which is still within us, that it should obtain complete dominion over us; and then, we should only be described as those marked by “an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God” (Heb 3:12)—that is, as *apostates*. It is therefore fitting that we should now consider the grand remedy and preventative. “Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it” (Heb 4:1-2).

The exhortation begun at Hebrews 3:12 is not completed unto Hebrews 4:11. The connecting link between the two chapters is found in the words, “So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief” (Heb 3:19)—*that* was what gave point to the exhortation of 3:12, and *that* is also made the basis of the warning of Hebrews 4:1 and the injunction of 4:11. Israel had a promise of entering into Canaan, but it profited them not, because they did not mix faith with it (Heb 4:2). We, too, have a promise of entering the antitypical Canaan, but it will advantage us nothing if it be received with unbelief. The promise made to Israel is recorded in Exodus 6:6-8, yet the fact remains that—excepting only Caleb and Joshua—none of the adult Hebrews who were delivered from Egypt ever entered Canaan! Did then the promise of God fail of its accomplishment?

No. Why not? First, because that promise of Exodus 6 was made to Israel generally and collectively, *as a people*—it did not specify that all, or even any, of that particular generation were to enter in. Second, though no condition was expressly named, yet, as the event proved, it was necessarily implied: The promise must be “mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2)—as the threat of Jonah 3:4 could only be averted by repentance. Had an absolute and unconditional promise been made to that particular generation, it must have been performed. Instead, the fulfilment of that promise was suspended on their believing and acting accordingly. Thus, it was a promise addressed to human responsibility. God made no promise to Israel that He would bring them into Canaan—whether they believed and obeyed, or no. Nor did their unbelief make the promise of God of none effect. It was accomplished to the next generation, who believed God and obeyed the instructions of His servant—see Joshua 21:43.

God’s dealings with the Hebrews furnish an analogy of the principles which operate in connection with the promise of the Gospel, which is addressed to sinners as moral agents. The promise is indeed “sure to all the [chosen] seed” (Rom 4:16), for every one redeemed by Christ will verily enter the purchased possession. Yet, the Gospel itself does not testify directly to any individual that Christ so died for him in particular, that it is certain *he* shall be saved by His death. Instead, it proclaims, “He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned” (Mar 16:16). It is only by my *believing* the Gospel that I am secured of eternal life, and it is only as I hold fast the Truth and am regulated by it, that I can legitimately enjoy the comfort of the Gospel. In other words, I can only spell out my election, as I put my trust in the atoning blood of Christ, and then serve Him.

The Gospel is addressed to human responsibility. It demands a believing acceptance from those who hear it. The proclamation that Christ is a Saviour for Hell-deserving sinners avails me nothing, until I make personal appropriation of it. It avails me nothing, until I regard the Gospel as being addressed to me individually. It avails me nothing until I mix faith (Heb 4:2) with it—that is, until I accept God’s verdict that I am a Law-condemned, lost, and bankrupt sinner, and come to Christ owning myself to be such, and put my trust in the sufficiency of His atoning sacrifice. Then, it is that—on the authority of Him who says, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved” (Act 16:31)—I have Divine warrant to be assured that He is my *own* Saviour, and to say with Job, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25)—not because I deem myself of God’s elect, but because I have received the sinner’s Saviour.

God’s Word, whether it be the hearing or the reading of it, only *profits* the soul as it is “mixed with faith” (Heb 4:2). Faith is so many-sided, and its operations so diverse, that (in condescension to our weakness) it has pleased the Holy Spirit to use quite a number of varied figures to set forth its operations and acts. It is likened unto looking (Isa 45:22), unto setting to our “seal” (Joh 3:33), fleeing “for refuge” and laying “hold upon the hope set before us” (Heb 6:18), eating (Jer 15:16), drinking (Joh 7:37), and committing “unto him” (2Ti 1:12). In our text, the similitude of mixing faith (Heb 4:2) is taken from the mingling of the saliva with our food, which—through chewing it thoroughly and rolling it about in our mouth—is an

aid unto digestion; and to the mixing of the juices of the stomach, so that the food is duly assimilated and becomes part of our bodies.

If our food be not properly chewed and mixed with our salvia, it will cause indigestion, and so far from being assimilated and nourishing the body, it will upset us. So it is with our hearing of the Gospel: If we mix not faith therewith, not only will the soul receive no profit, but it will add to our condemnation in the Day to come. We may listen to God's servant and be duly impressed with his solemnity, or stirred by his earnestness, we may admire the logic of his arguments and the eloquence of his diction, we may be moved by the forcefulness of his illustrations and brought to tears by his descriptions of Christ's sufferings—and yet, obtain no spiritual benefit therefrom. Why? Because we were occupied only with the preacher and his preaching, admiring a *sermon*. Because we failed to mix “with faith” the Word—and faith has to do solely with *God*.

Faith, my reader, brings in God. He is its sole Object. Faith has to do not with reasonings, feelings, or inward impressions and impulses—but with God and His Word. When a convicted sinner hears the Gospel and mixes faith with it, he realises that *God* is speaking through the minister, that God is speaking directly to *him*, that God is addressing his own immortal soul. It is now that he begins to realise the force of that Word, “he that hath ears to hear, let him hear” (Luk 8:8). “Let him hear” means “let him *heed*”: Let him take home to himself *what* he hears and be suitably affected thereby. It is the same if I am *reading* the Word. If we would “mix [it] with faith,” then I must regard that Word as God speaking through it, speaking directly and personally to *me*, speaking that which is true and for my good, and I must respond thereto and act accordingly.

The Feast is spread and the broad call is made, “Come; for all things are now ready” (Luk 14:17). That invitation is freely made to all who hear it, and there is a place assured at that Feast to every one who responds. In order to respond, I must mix faith with it—that is, I must thankfully recognise that invitation is made to *me*, utterly unworthy and unfit though I feel myself to be. I must believe that God means what He says, and promptly avail myself of His gracious overture. “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1Ti 1:15). It is not as one who has reason to believe his name is written in the Book of life, nor as one who feels a qualifying work of grace has begun in him, but simply as a *sinner*, I am to come to Christ for salvation. Receive that Truth into your heart as a little child, as addressed to you, and you *have* mixed faith with it, and masticated the Gospel.

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

19. Ephesians 1:15-23 – Part 5

We have now arrived at the fourth petition in this prayer. In pondering the same, it is both important and necessary to realise that, equally with the two preceding requests, this final one is based upon and governed by the initial blessing. We can no more know (spiritually and experimentally) what is “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19) without there first being given unto us “the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him” (1:17)—with the resultant, “the eyes of your understanding being enlightened”—then we can know “what is the hope of his calling” or “what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18). We are as entirely dependent upon the gracious operations of the Spirit for the one, as we are for the other. Grammatically, logically, doctrinally, and experimentally, the one is governed by and follows from the other. Something far more than a mere speculative or intellectual knowledge of God’s mighty power is here supplicated—namely, a personal acquaintance, a heart apprehension thereof, and for *that* anointed eyes—as the consequence of an increased measure of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17)—is indispensable.

“And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19). It may not be so apparent to some of us why the apostle felt the needs be of making this particular petition. To a greater or lesser degree, all the saints are conscious of their need for a fuller supply of “the spirit of wisdom and revelation” (1:17) in the knowledge of God, and of their being granted a clearer and enlarged apprehension of “what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints” (1:18); but probably, many of them are less aware that it is equally desirous and essential for them to know more about the mighty operations of God unto them. If they have good grounds for believing, *they* have received an effectual call, then they *do* realise that a miracle of grace must have been wrought in them that nothing short of omnipotence could have brought them from death unto life; yet, much more than that is included in this petition. We shall, therefore, begin our study of it by suggesting several reasons why the apostle should have made this particular request.

First, because he would *stain human pride*, for the natural man is so self-confident and self-sufficient that he deems himself quite competent to determine his own destiny. But over all his fancied efficiency, egotism and independency, God has written “without strength” (Rom 5:6)—not without physical, mental, or moral strength, but *spiritual*. Fallen man is spiritually dead; and therefore, not only is he utterly unable to perform a spiritual act in a spiritual way and from a spiritual principle, but he is devoid of any spiritual desires or aspirations, though he may be very devout as the world conceives of “religion.” “Without strength” *Godwards*—but who believes this today? Few indeed and fewer still have confirmed it by actual experience. The boast of Christendom is, “I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing” (Rev 3:17)—ignorant of her true condition, for the Divine Judge says to her, “and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked” (Rev 3:17). Nothing but that exceedingly great power of God can subdue the workings of such pride and bring the sinner as an humble suppliant, and empty-handed beggar to the throne of grace.

To believe on Jesus Christ with all our hearts appears to be one of the simplest acts imaginable, and to receive Him as our personal Lord and Saviour seems to present no great difficulty in it. Yet in reality, before any soul actually does so, there has to be the working of God’s mighty power; or, in other words, a miracle of grace must be wrought in him. Before a fallen and depraved creature will voluntarily and unreservedly surrender to the just claims of Christ, before he will forsake his cherished sins and abandon his beloved idols, before his proud heart is brought to repudiate all his righteousness as filthy rags, before he is willing to be saved by grace alone as a bankrupt pauper and a vile wretch, before he is ready to wholeheartedly receive Christ as his Prophet, Priest and King—God must put forth the same mighty power unto him as He wrought in the Mediator when He raised Him from the dead and exalted Him to His own right hand in the heavenlies. Nothing short of the exercise of Omnipotence is sufficient for the one or the other.

If any readers consider our language in the above paragraph to be too strong and sweeping, then it is because they so feebly apprehend the total depravity of the natural man. Did they but truly realise the fearful havoc which the Fall has wrought in the whole of man’s nature and constitution, and were they better acquainted with both the might and deceitfulness of indwelling sin, were they but aware of the fact that every descendant of Adam is “shapen in iniquity” (Psa 51:5), and born into the world the slave of sin; and

that no efforts of his own, nor any attempts by his fellow-men can, to the slightest degree, deliver him from his fearful bondage—then it would be apparent that a supernatural power must intervene, if ever he is to be emancipated from his captivity, that none but the hand of God can smite off his fetters and bring him out of prison. If the spiritual darkness of man's understanding, the perversity of his will, the disorderliness of his affections and passions were better understood, then it would be more evident that no mere reformation could suffice, that nothing short of personal regeneration—the communication to him of a new nature and life—could be of any avail.

Second, because we are so *ignorant of the terrible powers arrayed against us*. When engaged in a serious conflict, nothing is so fatal to success as to underestimate the strength of our opponents. Only as our judgment of the might and malignity of our spiritual foes are formed by the teaching of Holy Writ, can we really assess the same. Unless our thoughts concerning the enemies of our souls be regulated by what God's Word reveals thereon, we are certain to err. Above, we have referred to the potency of indwelling sin, but how little is its awful dominion and prevalency realised! "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer 13:23). The natural man is no more able to improve his sinful nature and make himself love God, than the Negro can alter the colour of his skin. As neither external applications, nor internal potions could whiten his dark complexion—so neither education, culture, nor reformation can change the sinner's nature, and bring him to hate what he now loves, or love that to which he is inveterately averse.

Not only is the natural man the slave of sin, but he is also *the captive of the Devil*. Immediately after the prayer, we are now pondering as the apostle reminded the saints: "In time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph 2:2). So complete is Satan's dominion over the unregenerate, that he not only tempts them from without, but works *within* them, so that they are moved and made both to will and to do of his evil pleasure; and therefore, is he termed their "father," and as Christ declared unto the Pharisees "and the lusts [desires, behests] of your father ye will do" (Joh 8:44). They fondly imagine they are 'free agents,' pleasing themselves, but in so concluding, they are deceived by their arch-enemy, their master and king—for they are held fast in "the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2Ti 2:26), and no more able to escape from his toils, than they are to create a world; nay, they have no desire so to do.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2Co 4:3-4). What then can his infatuated victims do? As the "prince of this world" (Joh 14:30), he directs its politics and policies, as "the god of this world" (2Co 4:4), he controls its superstitions and religions; thereby maintaining his "kingdom" (Mat 12:26), and governing his subjects. In His parable of the Wheat, our Lord intimated something of the fearful dominion of our great foe: "When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart" (Mat 13:19). How helpless then are his victims! One has but to read the case of the poor demoniac in Mark 5, whom "no man could bind...no, not with chains," to ascertain how thoroughly unavailing are all human attempts to escape from his thralldom. Yet how little is this realised!

When the Lord saves a person, He casts the Devil out of him, and *that* is a work of exceeding great power, such as He alone is capable of putting forth. This was clearly made known by His statement, "When a strong man armed keepeth his palace, his goods are in peace [i.e. secure]: But when a stronger than he shall come upon him, and overcome him, he taketh from him all his armour wherein he trusted, and divideth his spoils" (Luk 11:21-22). Only Divine omnipotence can turn souls "from the power of Satan unto God" (Act 26:18). Nor does he admit defeat, even when any of his captives *are* taken from him by force. No, he makes the most relentless and persevering efforts to recapture them, employing his powerful and numerous emissaries to encompass that end. Therefore are the saints warned, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood [merely human beings], but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph 6:12); and hence, they are bidden to "be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God" (Eph 6:10-11a).

Third, because of *the unbelief and timidity of the saints*. We are creatures of extremes. When our self-confidence and self-sufficiency is subdued, we are prone to become occupied with our weakness and insufficiency; instead of keeping our eyes fixed steadily on the One who began a good work in us—as we learn something of the might of our foes, both within and without, and our feebleness, and incompetency to resist

them—we are apt to become thoroughly discouraged and give way to despair. This, it seems to us, explains why the apostle reserved this petition for the last. He had just asked that the saints might know what are “the riches of the glory of his [God’s] inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18), and then it was as though he anticipated their inevitable objection: How shall such vile creatures, as we, ever come to be made glorious? Even though we have been delivered from a worse than Egyptian bondage, are we not likely, as the Israelites of old, to perish in the wilderness, ere we reach the promise land! It was to quieten such fears that Paul reminded them of the exceeding greatness of God’s power.

In the early part of Ephesians 1, much had been said about the good-will of God toward His people; and now, to warm their hearts and strengthen their faith, Paul would have them contemplate the Divine omnipotence. It is the power of God which executes His counsels. That power has ever been the confidence and glory of His saints—that He has a “mighty arm” (Psa 89:13) is the security of their salvation. It is inexpressibly blessed to see that the power of God is exactly proportioned to His promises: Has He given us “exceeding great and precious promises” (2Pe 1:4)?—then there is “the exceeding greatness of his power” (Eph 1:19) to make them good! That was the ground of Abram’s assurance when God declared he should have a son in his old age: “And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead. . .neither yet the deadness of Sara’s womb: He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; And being fully persuaded that, what he had promised, he was able also to perform” (Rom 4:19-21). It is in remembering the power of God that weakness and readiness to faint is changed into confidence and joy—see Psalm 77:7-15!

“That ye may know. . .what is the exceeding greatness of his power *to us—ward*” (Eph 1:18-19). That petition only meets with a suitable response from us, when we remember that the Divine omnipotence is engaged to uphold, strengthen, and defend His people, to complete the good work which it has begun in them, to fully redeem them from sin, Satan, and death, to perfectly conform them unto the image of His dear Son. Just in proportion, as believers realise that the infinite power of God is available for them to lay hold of and draw from, do they answer to the apostle’s design in placing upon record this request for them. When most conscious of our weakness and the might of our enemies, it is our privilege to come boldly to the throne of grace, and there, “find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). It is one thing to believe intellectually in the exceeding greatness of God’s power; but it is quite another for us to personally and experimentally “take hold” of His strength (Isa 27:5)—then, it is that we prove for ourselves the meaning of these words, “out of weakness were made strong” (Heb 11:34), and what it is to be “strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Ti 2:1).

Fourth, because *only thus is God honoured*. To give place to such a fear as David did, when he said, “I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul” (1Sa 27:1) is most dishonouring to God, and is the consequence of being absorbed with our enemies—rather than the Lord. Let self-diffidence be accompanied with confidence in God, and all will be well. Since the glory of God is concerned in the salvation and preservation of His people—and the apostle was about to make requests concerning the furtherance of the same—he, here, addressed Deity as “the Father of glory” (Eph 1:17). It is blessed to realise the import of that—since the Father of glory be the Author of our salvation, He will certainly be the *Guardian* of it. The same motive which disposed Him to contrive and effect our salvation will also move Him to ripen all the fruits of it. It is for this reason, chiefly, we may be sure that, “He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Phi 1:6). His glory requires it, and His power will secure it; and therefore is it termed, “his glorious power” (Col 1:11).

“That ye may know. . .what is the exceeding greatness of his power *to us—ward*” (Eph 1:18-19) in removing our enmity against Him, in dispelling the native darkness of our understandings, in subduing our rebellious wills, in drawing our hearts unto Himself, in giving us a love for His Law and a longing for holiness, in delivering us from the power of Satan. It is most necessary for us to know *that*, if all the praise and glory are to be ascribed unto Him, to whom alone it be due. As we compare ourselves with the unregenerate—who naturally may shame us in many respects, but who spiritually are in the broad road that leadeth to destruction, unconcerned about their eternal interests—we do well to ponder that question, “*Who maketh thee to differ?*” (1Co 4:7). The answer is, and can only be, a sovereign God, by the putting forth of His omnipotence and making us willing to receive Christ as our *Lord* in the day of His power. And if we can now perceive any good thing—the root of the matter in us, the fruits of a new nature—then we must exclaim, “Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory” (Psa 115:1).

This fourth petition then was a request that the saints might have a clearer understanding and a better apprehension of *how* that miraculous change within them had been brought about, and of what that initial change was the sure earnest. It was not produced by rational considerations, moral suasion—nor by the power of the preacher, for he can no more quicken dead souls, than he can dead bodies. It originated not in any act of our wills; it was not effected by any human agency. There was something *prior* to the consent of our wills; namely, a radical and permanent inward transformation, wrought by the hand of the Most High. And observe how energetic and impressive is the language used—not only ‘the power of God’ or ‘the greatness of that power,’ but “the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward” (Eph 1:19). So weighty and emphatic is the language of the Greek that it is difficult to reproduce in English: “The super-excellent sublime, and overcoming or triumphant greatness of His power” is how one rendered it.

We believe that Charles Hodge erred when he said that this exercise of the Divine power “evidently refers to the past and not to the future”—for surely, the tense of the verb here precludes any such limitation. We much prefer the excellent definition of J.C. Philpot: “The power put forth in first communicating; second, in subsequent maintaining; third, in completing and consummating the work of grace in the heart”—except that we would include God’s working on our behalf, and in the resurrection of our bodies, as well. But what we most desire to press upon the attention, and leave with the Christian reader, is that the exceeding greatness of God’s power is *to usward*. It is not merely latent in Himself—still less is it against us, as was the case with Pharaoh—but is engaged on our behalf, making all things work together for our good (Rom 8:28). Then what is there to fear! Join the apostle in praying for an enlarged heart-apprehension of it.

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

9b. Its Means

2. *Devotedness to God.* The lifelong work of mortification is but the negative side of the Christian life, being a means to an end: The positive aspect is that the redeemed and regenerated sinner is henceforth to live unto God, to wholly give up himself unto Him, to employ his faculties and powers in seeking to please Him and promote His glory. In his unregenerate days, he went “his *own way*” (Isa 53:6), and did that which was pleasing unto himself; but at conversion, he renounced the flesh, the world, and the Devil, and turned unto God as his absolute Lord, supreme End, and everlasting Portion. Mortification is the daily renewing of that renunciation, a continuing to turn away from all that God hates and condemns. Devotedness to God is a living out of the decision and promise, which the believer made at his conversion when he gave himself unto the Lord (2Co 8:5), chose Him for his highest Good, and entered into covenant with Him to love Him with all his heart, and serve Him with all his strength.

In exact proportion to his strict adherence to his surrender unto God, at his conversion will be the believer’s spiritual growth and progress in the Christian life. That mortification and devotedness unto God is the true order of the principal *means* for promoting spiritual prosperity, appears, first, from the grand type furnished in the O.T. When God began His dealings with Israel, He called them out of Egypt, separating them from the heathen—as He had their great progenitor, when He called him to leave Ur of Chaldea, a figure of mortification. But that was merely negative. Having delivered them from their old manner of life and brought them over the Red Sea, He brought them unto Himself (Exo 19:4), made known His will unto them, and entered into a solemn covenant—to which they were consenting parties, declaring, “All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient” (Exo 24:7). Just so long as they adhered to their vow and kept the covenant, all was well with them. Devotedness unto the Lord was the grand secret of spiritual success.

This order appears again in that oft-repeated word of Christ’s, which contains a brief, but comprehensive summary of His requirements: “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me” (Mat 16:24). *There* are the fundamental terms of Christian discipleship, and the basic principles by which the Christian life is to be regulated. Anyone who “will come after me”—who chooses, decides, determines to enlist under My banner, throw in his lot with Me, become one of My disciples, “let him deny himself, and take up his cross,” and that “daily” (Luk 9:23)—which presents to us the work of mortification. But that is only preliminary, a means to an end; the principal thing is “and *follow me*,” My example. What was the grand principle which regulated *Him*? What was the unchanging end of Christ’s life? This: “I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me”! (Joh 6:38) “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). And we are not following Christ, unless that be *our* aim and endeavour.

That devotedness to God is the outstanding mark, the essential duty, the pre-eminent thing in the Christian life, which is also clear from the teaching of the Epistles. “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). That appeal is made unto Christians, and *begins* the hortatory section of that Epistle! Up to that point, the apostle had set forth the great facts and doctrinal contents of the Gospel, and only once, did he break the thread of his discourse by interjecting an exhortation—namely, in 6:11-22, the force of which is here gathered up into a concise, but extensive summary. The “yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead” (Rom 6:13), and the “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19) is here paraphrased as, “present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God” (Rom 12:1). In substance, it is parallel with that word, “My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Pro 23:26).

The place which is given to this precept in the N.T. intimates its paramount importance: “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, *which is* your reasonable service” (Rom 12:1). That is the *first* exhortation of the Epistles addressed to the saints, taking precedence of all others! First, there is the duty which God requires from us. Second, the ground on which it is enforced, or the motive from which it is to be performed, is made known.

Third, the reasonableness of it is affirmed. The duty to which we are here exhorted is a call to the unre-served dedication and consecration of the Christian unto God. But since those are terms which have suffered not a little at the hands of various fanatics, we prefer to substitute for them the *devoting* of ourselves entirely unto God. That word “devote” is employed in Leviticus 27:23, 28, where it is defined as “a holy thing unto the LORD” (Lev 27:23); yea, “every devoted thing is most holy unto the LORD” (Lev 27:28)—that is, something which is set apart exclusively for His use.

Joshua 6 contains a solemn illustration of the force and implications of that term. Israel’s commander informed the people that “the city [of Jericho] shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the LORD” (Jos 6:17). Since it was His power that delivered this city of the Canaanites into their hands, He claimed it as *His*, to do with as He pleased; thereby precluding the Israelites from seizing any of its spoils for themselves. So that there might be no uncertainty in their minds, it was expressly added, “But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD” (Jos 6:19). Therein lay the enormity of Achan’s sin—not only in yielding to a spirit of covetousness, not only in deliberately disobeying a Divine commandment—but in taking unto himself that which was definitely devoted, or set apart, unto the Lord. Hence, the severity of the punishment meted out to him, and all his household. A monumental warning was that for all future generations—of how jealously God regards that which is set apart unto Himself; and the awful seriousness of putting to a profane, or common use, what has been consecrated to Him!

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1) signifies, then, that ye devote them unto God, that you solemnly set them apart unto Him—for His use, for His service, for His pleasure, for His glory. The Hebrew word for “devote” (*charam*) is rendered “consecrate” in Micah 4:13 and “dedicated” (*cherem*) in Ezekiel 44:29. The Greek word for “present” (*paristemi*) occurs first in Luke 2:22, where we are told that the parents of Jesus “brought Him to Jerusalem to *present Him* to the Lord”—which, in the next verse, is defined as, “holy to the Lord.” How deeply significant and suggestive that its initial reference should be to our Great Exemplar! It is found again in 2 Corinthians 11:2, “that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ.” It is the term used in Ephesians 5:27, “That he might present it to himself a glorious church.” It is the same word that is translated, “*yield yourselves unto God*” in Romans 6:13. It therefore means a definite, voluntary, personal act of full surrender to God.

This duty which is enjoined upon the Christian is here set forth, more or less, in the language of the O.T. types, as the term, “a living sacrifice” clearly intimates, while the word “present” is a temple term for the bringing thither of anything to God. This duty was announced in O.T. prophecy: “They shall bring all your brethren *for an offering* unto the LORD out of all nations” (Isa 66:20)—not to be slain and burnt in the fire, but to be presented for God’s use and pleasure. So, too, it was revealed that when “our God shall come” (Psa 50:3), He will say, “Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me *by sacrifice*” (Psa 50:5). There were three principal things taught by the Levitical offerings. First, our sinfulness, guilt and pollution, which could only be expiated by “a life for life”; and that was for our humiliation. Second, the wondrous provision of God’s grace: Christ, a substitute and surety, dying in our stead, which was for our consolation. Third, the love and gratitude due unto God, and the new obedience which He requires from us; and that is for our sanctification.

The Christian is required to surrender the whole of his being unto God. The language in which that injunction is couched in Romans 12:1 is taken from the usages of the Mosaic economy. “Present your bodies a living sacrifice” (Rom 12:1) connotes, present yourselves as embodied intelligences. Our “bodies” are singled out for specific mention to show there is to be no reservation—that the entire man is to be devoted unto the Lord: “The very God of peace sanctify you *wholly*; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless” (1Th 5:23). When God called Israel out of Egypt, He said, “there shall not an hoof be left behind” (Exo 10:26). Our “bodies are the members of Christ” (1Co 6:15); and therefore, does He bid us, “yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness” (Rom 6:19). It is through the body that our new nature expresses itself. As 1 Corinthians 6 tells us, the body is “for the Lord; and the Lord for the body” (1Co 6:13). And again, “know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost...therefore glorify God in your body” (1Co 6:19-20).

This duty is expressed in O.T. terms, because the apostle was comparing Christians to sacrificial animals whose bodies were devoted as offerings unto the Lord; and because he would thereby particularly emphasise that obligation, which devolved upon them to be and do and suffer whatever God required. The

'living sacrifice' points to a parallel, and not a contrast—for no animal *carcase* could be brought by an Israelite. A living victim was brought by the offerer, and he laid his hand upon his head to signify he transferred to God all his right and interest in it; then he killed it before God, after which the priests, Aaron's sons, brought the blood and sprinkled it upon the altar (Lev 1:2-5). In the application of this term to the Christian, it may also include the idea of *permanency*: Present your bodies a perpetual sacrifice, as in Christ "the *living bread*" (Joh 6:51) and "a living hope" (1Pe 1:3); it is not to be a transient "sacrifice," but one never to be recalled. "Holy" means unblemished, and set apart solely for God's use—as the vessels of the tabernacle and temple were devoted exclusively to His service.

The Christian is called upon to give up himself unto God—and that cannot be done without cost, without proving that a "sacrifice" is indeed a *sacrifice*, even though a willing one; yet, it is only by so doing, we can be conformed to the death of Christ (Phi 3:10). It is to be done intelligently, *voluntarily*, as a free will offering to God—with full and hearty consent, as one gives himself or herself to another in marriage, so that the believer can now say, "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song 6:3). Yet, it is to be done *humbly*, with grief and shame for having so long delayed, for having wasted so much of my time, and strength in the service of sin. It is to be done *gratefully*, from a deep sense of Divine grace and mercy, so that the love of Christ constrains me. It is to be done *unreservedly*, with no reservation, an unqualified devoting of myself unto God. It is to be done *purposefully*, with the sincere desire, intention, and endeavour to be ruled by Him in all things, ever preferring and putting His interests and pleasure before my own.

But let us notice now the ground on which this duty is enforced, or the motive by which it is to be performed. "I beseech you therefore, brethren, *by the mercies of God*" (Rom 12:1). It is not, "I command you"—for it is not the Divine authority to which appeal is made. "Beseech" is the tender language of loving entreaty, asking for a gracious response to the amazing grace of God. The "therefore" is a deduction made from what precedes. In the foregoing chapters the apostle had, from Romans 3:21 onwards, set forth the Gospel "mercies" or riches of Divine grace. They consist of election, redemption, regeneration justification, sanctification, with the promise of preservation and glorification—blessings that passeth knowledge. What, then, shall be our response to such inestimable favours? It was as though the apostle anticipated his Christian brethren being so overwhelmed by such lavish displays of God's goodness unto them, they would exclaim, "What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits" (Psa 116:12)? What possible return can I make unto Him for His surpassing love? Here, says Paul, is the answer to such a query, to such a heart longing.

"I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God" (Rom 12:1). It is *thus*, you will manifest your gratitude and evince your appreciation of all God has done for, unto, and in you. It is *thus*, you will exhibit the sincerity of your love for Him. It is *thus*, you will prove yourselves to be "followers" of Christ and adorn His Gospel. It is *thus*, you will please Him who has done everything for you—not merely by vocal thanksgiving, but by personal thanks-*living*. Thus did the apostle begin to present and press those obligations, which are involved by the blessed favours and privileges set forth in the preceding chapters. Those doctrinal disclosures are not so many speculative things to engage our brains, but are precious discoveries for the inflaming of our hearts. The contents of Romans 3 to 8 are given not only for the informing of our understandings, but also for the *reforming* of our lives. We should never abstract privilege from duty—nor duty from privilege—but take them together. The "therefore" of Romans 12:1 points the practical application to all that goes before.

"Acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." Poor and paltry as is such a return unto the Divine munificence; yet God is pleased to receive the offering up of ourselves, and to announce that such an offering is agreeable to Him. That is in striking and blessed contrast from "the sacrifice of the wicked is an *abomination* to the LORD" (Pro 15:8). The word, "reasonable service" are susceptible of various renditions, though we doubt if any are better than that of the A.V. Logical or rational are warrantable alternatives—for God certainly requires to be served intelligently, and not blindly, or superstitiously. Literally, it may be translated, "your service according to the Word." "Service" may be rendered "worship"—for it is an act of homage and a temple service which is here in view; and thus, accord with the idea of "sacrifice." God requires the worship of our body, as well as of the mind. But in the light of the preceding "therefore," we prefer "reasonable service."

"Which is your reasonable service." And is it not so? Those that "have rejected the word of the LORD" are 'fools' (Jer 8:9) and 'unreasonable men' (2Th 3:2), because lacking in wisdom to discern the excellency and equity of God's ways. What can be more reasonable than, that, He who made all things for

Himself should be served by the creatures that He made? That we should live unto Him who gave us being? That the Supreme should be obeyed, the infallible Truth believed, that He who can destroy should be feared, that He who doth reward should be loved and trusted in?" (E. Reynolds, 1670). It is reasonable, because it is what Omniscience requires of us: This is the fundamental part of our covenant when we choose Him as our God: "One shall say, I am the LORD's...and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD" (Isa 44:5). By our own solemn consent, we acknowledge God's right in us, and yield to His claims. He requires that His right be confirmed by our consent: "*Take my yoke upon you*" (Mat 11:29)—He forces it on none.

"Which is your reasonable service." And again, we ask, Is it not so? Does not a change of masters involve a changed order of life? Should not those who have been recovered from sin to God show the reality of that change, in being as earnest in holiness, as before they were in sin? Talk is cheap, but actions speak louder than words. If God gave Christ to us as a sin-offering, is it too much to ask that we devote ourselves to Him as a thank-offering? Christ was content to be nothing, that God might be all; and is it not "reasonable" that our judicial oneness with Christ should have—for its complement—practical conformity to Him. If we have, by regeneration, passed from death unto life, is it not reasonable and meet that we devote ourselves as a "living sacrifice" unto God, and walk in newness of life? Are not the "mercies of God"—appropriated by faith and realised in the heart—sufficient inducement to move His people to give up themselves entirely to His will—to be ordered, employed, and disposed of, according to His good pleasure (Phi 2:13)?

Are any inclined to ask, "What has all the above to do with spiritual growth or Christian progress?" We answer, "Much every way." Genuine conversion is a giving up of ourselves unto God, an entering into covenant with Him that He should be *our God*, and His promises are made to "such as *keep* his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to *do* them" (Psa 103:18). But if we turn from devoting ourselves to God unto sin and the world—and thereby, break the covenant—what possible spiritual prosperity can we enjoy, or progress make? Christ died for all His people, "that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but *unto him* which died for them, and rose again" (2Co 5:15). If, then, I relapse into a course of self-pleasing, so far from advancing in the Christian life, I have backslidden, repudiated the initial dedication of myself to God, and have cast Christ's yoke from off me. Spiritual growth consists of *increasing* devotedness to God, and being more and more conformed unto Christ's death.

It is one of the most effectual means for spiritual growth to live in the daily realisation that Christ has "redeemed us *to God*" (Rev 5:9): To restore His rights over us, to admit us to His favour and friendship, to enjoy fellowship and communion with Him, that we may be for His pleasure and glory; and then, to conduct ourselves accordingly. Only as we are wholly devoted to His service and praise, only as all our springs and joy are in Him, do we actualise the design of our redemption. No progress in the Christian life can be made any further, than as we are regulated by the fact that "ye are not your own...For ye are bought with a price" (1Co 6:19-20). When that is really apprehended in the heart, the soul will become the consecrated priest, and his body will be the living sacrifice offered unto God, daily through Jesus Christ. Then will it be the devotedness—not of constraint, but of *love*. The more fully we are conformed to Christ's death, the more closely we be following the example He has left us, the more (and the *only*) true Christian progress are we making.

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

7c. *Its Meaning*

In our last, we pointed out that reconciliation is an attitude or relation, and dwelt upon the fact that it is a *mutual* affair. This is so obvious, that it should need no arguing; yet, since so many have denied that God required to be reconciled unto sinners, we must perforce dwell upon it. Where one has wronged another, and a break ensues between them, then just as surely as 'it takes two to make a quarrel,' so it takes two for a friendship to be restored again. If the one who committed the injury confesses his fault, and the other refuses to accept his apology and forgive him, there is no reconciliation effected between them; equally so, if the injured party be willing to overlook the fault, desiring peace at any price; yet, if the wrongdoer continues to bear enmity against the other, the breach still remains. There must be a mutual good-will before a state of amity prevails. That holds good in connection with God and His sinning creatures.

We dwelt upon the fact that the entrance of sin brought about a changed relationship between God and man. Since Adam stood as the federal head of the race, and transacted as the legal representative of all his posterity, when he fell, the whole of mankind apostatised from God. In consequence of the fall, all mankind came under the curse of the Law; and therefore, the elect—equally with the non-elect—are "by nature the children of wrath, *even as others*" (Eph 2:3): Loved by God with regard to His eternal good-will, but born under His wrath in regard of His Law and its administration—let those words be carefully pondered. "Accepted in the beloved" (Eph 1:6) from all eternity, yet entering this time-state under Divine condemnation. Holy and without blame in Christ by election, yet guilty and depraved in ourselves by sin. We must distinguish—as Scripture does—between how God viewed His people in Christ in the glass of His decrees, and how He regards them as in Adam, participating in the consequences of his transgression; and continuing in sin, by their own course of constant rebellion against Him, until they are regenerated.

"There is therefore *now* no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1) clearly implies that *before* they came to be "in Christ Jesus," the elect *were* under condemnation—as Romans 5:18 declares, "by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation." If it be asked, "But were not the elect 'in Christ' from all eternity?" The answer is, "In one sense, yes; in another sense, no." "In Christ" always has reference to *union* with Him. The elect were *mystically* united to Christ, being "chosen...in him before the foundation of the world" (Eph 1:4); yet until that decree is actualised, they are "without Christ" (Eph 2:12). At regeneration, the elect are *vitally* united to Christ: He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit (1Co 6:19 and compare 2Co 5:17). Hence, Paul speaks of those who "were in Christ *before me*" (Rom 16:7). Having been brought from death unto life, the elect embrace the Gospel offer and become *fiducially* united to Christ—"fiducial" is from the Latin "fido" (to trust)—for they, then, savingly "believeth in [or "into"] Him" (Joh 3:15). "But he that believeth not is condemned already (Joh 3:18). The members of Christ's body, the Church, are in a state of guilt and condemnation until they personally exercise faith in the atoning blood of Christ. We have laboured this point, because some of our readers have been taught the contrary.

It was the entrance of sin which caused the breach between God and us, but in this connection, particularly, it is important to remember what sin essentially consists of. While in some passages, sin is regarded as a "debt," and God, in connection therewith, as the Creditor; in other places, as an "offense," and God, in connection therewith, as the injured Party; and in still other verses, as a "disease," and God, in connection therewith, as the great Physician—yet none of those terms bring before us the primary element in, and basic character of, sin. The fundamental idea of sin is that it is "a transgression of the law" (1Jo 3:4) of God, the Rule which He has commanded us to observe; and this should, therefore, be the leading aspect in which it is contemplated when we consider how God deals with it. Proof of that is found in connection with the origin of human sin, in Genesis 2 and 3: God gave man a commandment which he transgressed: "By one man's *disobedience* many were made sinners" (Rom 5:19).

Now, as the essential idea of sin is not that it is merely a debt or injury, but a violation of our Rule of conduct, then it follows that the particular character in which God ought to be contemplated when we consider Him dealing with sin is not that of a Creditor or injured Party—who may remit debt or forgive the injury as He pleases—but in His office as the supreme Lord, sin as transgression of the Divine Law has, for its necessary corollary, God as *the Judge*. Since He has promulgated a Divine Law which prohibits sin under pain of death, He is bound by His veracity to maintain the honour of His Law and establish His

government by strict justice; and therefore, He cannot pardon sin, unless an adequate provision be made for accomplishing those objects. As the Judge of all the earth, and the Rector of the universe, His own perfection requires Him to insist that if the penalty of the Law be remitted, it must be by another suffering it vicariously, thereby meeting the claims of His Law.

There could be no reconciliation between an offended God and His apostate people, until the breach between them had been healed, until His righteous wrath as the Governor of this world had been appeased, and until they also throw down the weapons of their warfare against Him. As the Judge of all, His honour required that His Law should receive full satisfaction; and since His fallen people were unable to make reparation, He graciously provided a Surety for them, who magnified His Law by rendering to it a perfect obedience, and by dying in their stead; and thus, enduring for them its unmitigated curse. Thereby, *God's* legal "enmity" or wrath was appeased, and the sins of His people were blotted out; thereby, God was propitiated, and their guilt expiated. Through His atoning sacrifice, Christ removed every legal obstacle, which stood in the way of God's being merciful unto transgressors and receiving them into His favour; and by His merits, Christ procured the Holy Spirit (Act 2:33), who, by His effectual operations in the elect, slays their enmity against God, and brings them into loving and loyal subjection to Him; and thus (at their conversion), *they* are reconciled to God.

Socinians have objected that it was neither necessary—nor just—that Christ should both obey the Law in His people's stead *and* yet suffer punishment on the account of their transgressions, seeing that obedience is all that the Law requires. Such a demur would be valid, had Christ been acting as the Surety of an innocent people who were under probation; but since He entered the Lawplace of transgressors, the objection is entirely without point. Obedience is not all that the Law requires of *guilty* creatures—for they are not only obliged to be obedient for the future, but to make satisfaction for the past. The covenant which the Lord God made with Adam had two branches: Obey, and live ("the commandment, which was ordained to life," Rom 7:10); or sin, and die (Gen 2:17). And therefore, since Christ was "made under the law" (Gal 4:4)—which, in the final analysis, signified "under the Covenant of Works"—and since He was acting and transacting as "the last Adam" and "the second man" (1Co 15: 45, 47), it devolved upon Him to meet the requirements of *both* branches of the Covenant. As we discussed that at length in the last four articles of the 1944 issues, there is no need to further enlarge upon it.

Since the will of God changes not, and the requirements of His government remain the same forever, then, if a Surety engaged Himself to discharge all the obligations of God's elect, He must necessarily meet all those requirements on their behalf. The Son, therefore, became incarnate and subjected Himself unto the full demands of the Law and was dealt with according to its high spirituality and rigorous justice. First, He honoured the preceptive part of the Covenant by rendering a perfect obedience to every detail. But that of itself would make no satisfaction for His people's transgressions, nor afford any expression of the Divine displeasure against sin; and therefore, after a life spent in unremittingly doing the will of God, must also needs lay down His life. "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" (Heb 7:26). His compliance with the precepts was preparatory to His enduring the penalty of the Law, when He stood at the bar of God in the room of the guilty—and before God as the offended Law-giver and angry Judge—executing upon Him what was due them.

Some are likely to still have a difficulty at this point: How could Christ be the gift of God's *love*, if that Gift had for its first end the removing of His judicial "enmity" and the placating of His *wrath*? But such a difficulty arises from failure to distinguish between things that differ: Between God, in His essential and in His official character; and between the elect, as He views them in Christ, and as He sees them as the fallen descendants of Adam. To affirm that God both loved and hated them at the same time, and in the same respect, would indeed be a palpable contradiction; but this, we do not. God loved His people in respect of His eternal purpose, but He was angry against them with respect to His violated Law and provoked justice by sin. There is no inconsistency whatever between God's loving the saints with a love of good-will, and the hindrances to the outflow and the effects thereof—which their sins and His holiness interposed in the way of peace and friendship. Though the holiness of God's nature, the righteousness of His government, and the veracity of His Word placed barriers in the way of His taking sinners into communion with Himself, without full satisfaction being made to His Law; yet, they did not hinder His love from providing the means whereby those barriers were removed, and they were recovered from their apostasy.

"I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3); "I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was *not beloved*"

(Rom 9:25). It should be quite evident to every candid reader that, if we are to avoid a contradiction in those two passages, we must make a distinction in the *interpretation* of them; that in them, the love of God is viewed in entirely different aspects. In other words, we must ascertain the precise *meaning* of the terms used. The former speaks of His paternal love, or good-will, towards them; the latter, of His judicial favour, or love-of-acceptance. The one concerns His eternal counsels; the other relates to His dealings with us in a time-state. The former is His love of philanthropy, or benevolence; the latter, of His love of approbation. The one has to do with His loving us in Christ; the other, with His loving us for our *own* sakes—because of what the Holy Spirit wrought in us at regeneration and conversion. The one concerns our predestination; the other, our reconciliation. That distinction reveals the confusion in the piece from Mr. Philpot, quoted in “The Introduction” of this series.

The same distinction has to be observed again, when we contemplate God’s dual attitude toward Christ, the Son of His love, whom He both loved and poured out His wrath upon—yes, and at the *same time*, though in entirely different relations. When the Father declared, “This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Mat 3:17), He was expressing Himself paternally, as well as testifying to His approbation of both Christ’s Person and Work. But when we are told that, “It pleased the LORD to bruise him” (Isa 53:10); and when He cried, “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts” (Zec 13:7), it was as the Law-administrator, or Judge, that He was acting. Never was God more “well pleased” with His beloved Son than when He hung upon the Cross in obedience to Him (Phi 2:10); yet He withdrew from Him every effect or manifestation of His love during those three hours of awful darkness; yea, poured out His wrath upon Him as our sin-bearer, so that He exclaimed, “Thy wrath lieth hard upon me, and thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves” (Psa 88:7).

The very men who object to God’s loving and yet being antagonistic to the same person at one and the same time, perceive no antagonism between those things, when they are adumbrated [suggested] before their eyes, and illustrated in their own experience on this lower plane. Love and anger are perfectly consistent at the same moment, and may—in different respects—be terminated on the same subject. A father should feel a double affection or emotion toward a rebellious son: he loves him as his offspring, but is angry with him as disobedient. Have we not read of a judge who was called upon to pass sentence on his own child? Or of a military officer who was required to court-martial his son for insubordination in the ranks? Why, then, should we have difficulty in perceiving that while in their lapsed state, God loved His people with a love of good-will, yet loathed and was angry with them as rebels against His government. As the injured Father, He laid aside His anger; but as the Preserver of Justice, He demanded full satisfaction from them, or their Surety.

Equally pointless is another objection made by Socinians and Arminians; namely, that such a doctrine, as we are propounding, represents God as changeable, as a fickle Being—first angry, and then pacified. But precisely the same objection might as well be brought against *repentance*! If it be granted that sin is displeasing to God, then obviously, He is no longer displeased when the sinner repents, and He forgives him! “The atonement did not make God hate sin less than He did before, or excite feelings of compassion towards us, which did not formerly exist. He loved us before He gave His Son; and sin still is, and ever will be, the object of His utmost aversion. The effect of the atonement was a change of *dispensation*, which is consistent with immutability of nature” (J. Dick). The fact is that God demanded an atonement, because He does *not* change, and would not rescind or modify His Law, revoke His threatening, nor lay aside His abhorrence of sin. They—who represent God as being mutable—are the very ones who assert that He pardons sin without satisfaction to His justice.

The precise nature of “reconciliation” can be ascertained clearly from the Levitical offerings. Unless those O.T. types were misleading, then they definitely exhibited the fact that the sacrifice of Christ pacified God, made peace, and procured His favour. Personally, we unhesitatingly adopt the words of Principal Cunningham when he said, “The whole institution of Levitical sacrifices and the place which they occupied in the Mosaic economy, were regulated and determined by a regard to the one sacrifice of Christ.” Those sacrifices set forth the principles on which the effects of the Redeemer’s work depended, and provide the surest and best materials for interpreting and illustrating the character and bearing of the Atonement. Those typical sacrifices demonstrated beyond any doubt that the sacrifice of Christ was vicarious and expiatory, that it was presented and accepted in the room and stead of others, that it propitiated God and averted His wrath; and therefore, that it procured the exemption of His people from the penal consequences of their sins and effected their reconciliation unto God.

In our May article, we quoted Numbers 16:46 in proof that “an atonement” is made in order to turn away the “wrath...[of] the LORD;” let us now allude to further examples. “And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings. *So* the LORD was intreated for the land, and the plague was stayed from Israel” (2Sa 24:25)—the occasion being when “the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel” because David had numbered the people (2Sa 24:1). The same incident is mentioned again in 1 Chronicles 21, where we are told that “God sent an angel unto Jerusalem to destroy it” (1Ch 21:15), which was in addition to the “pestilence” or “plague” which slew seventy thousand Israelites mentioned in 2 Samuel 24. Then, after David had built an altar there unto the LORD and had offered appropriate sacrifices and “called upon the LORD,” and He had “answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar” (1Ch 21:26) (in token of His acceptance of the same), we read that “the LORD commanded the angel; and he put up his sword again into the sheath thereof” (1Ch 21:27). What anointed eye can fail to see in that incident, a vivid anticipation and adumbration of what occurred at Calvary!

There is a striking case of alienated friends being reconciled by means of sacrifice recorded in Job 42. “The LORD said to Eliphaz the Temanite, My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath. Therefore take unto you now seven bullocks and seven rams, and go to my servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and my servant Job shall pray for you: for him will I accept: lest I deal with you after your folly” (Job 42:7-8). Upon which Owen pointed out: “The offenders are Eliphaz and his two friends, the offence is their folly in not speaking aright of God. The issue of the breach is that the wrath or anger of God was towards them; reconciliation is the turning away of that wrath; the means whereby this was done, appointed by God, is the sacrifice of Job for atonement. This, then, is that which we ascribe to the death of Christ when we say that, as a sacrifice, we were reconciled to God. Having made God our Enemy by sin, Christ by His sacrifice appeased His wrath and brought us into favour again with God.”

The more closely that example in Job 42:7-8 be examined, the more clearly should we perceive the meaning and significance of the antitype. There was a declaration of God’s anger against those three men; yet also a revelation of His love to them, by directing them to the means whereby His anger might be put away; and they, restored to His favour. Clearly, He had good-will unto them *before* He directed them what to do; yet He was not *then* reconciled to them—otherwise, there was no need of an atonement for appeasing Him. There was a cloud upon God’s face; yet the sun of mercy peeped out through that cloud—as He acquaints them with His anger, so He also shows them the way to pacify it. Though His wrath was truly kindled; yet He was ready for it to be quenched by the means of His prescribing. God could not find complacency in them, till He was reconciled to them. In acting on their behalf, Job was a type of Christ, whose propitiatory sacrifice, God both appointed and accepted.

CHRISTIAN PATRIOTISM

We have long felt the need for something helpful on this subject, and probably not a few of our readers have also desired a simple presentation of what God's Word teaches thereon. If we find it to be one which is by no means free of difficulties, that must be, because we have ourselves created them—by our prejudices and preconceptions—for God has given us His Word to legislate for us and direct our minds and actions, and not to perplex and bewilder us. In that Word are instructions pertinent to every relation, and suited to every situation we may be in. Sometimes those instructions are in the form of express precepts; sometimes, by broad general principles, which are applicable to many different circumstances; and sometimes, by the recorded example or prayers of Christ and His servants. God has not left us in darkness or ignorance of His will, but has provided His Word to be “a lamp unto...[our] feet” (Psa 119:105).

It is then to God's Word we must turn, if we would ascertain His revealed mind on the relation which His people sustain to the State, their duties to the government, and obligations to their fellow-citizens. Nor must we confine ourselves to any one section of the Word, nor so interpret any one statement in it as to contradict or cancel another—but must compare passage with passage, and seek to ascertain God's will by giving due place to every intimation thereof.

This has not always been done; and in certain circles, there appears to be not a little confusion in the minds of godly people. On the one hand, there are those who fail to clearly recognise the line of demarcation, which God has drawn between the world and the Church, who regard spirituality more as an abstraction, as something which concerns and is suited only to one side of our composite life—like a garment to don only on special occasions, leaving them free to wear their ordinary apparel the remainder of their time. Others, in their reaction from that concept, have swung to the opposite extreme and have concluded that, because the Christian is a “stranger and pilgrim” in this scene, he has no concern with the temporal well-being of his country.

Recently, we read a sermon which was preached during the time of the Napoleonic wars, when England was seriously threatened with invasion; and as it is the best thing we have ever seen on the subject, we propose to give our readers the benefit of it. It sets forth, in general at least, what we personally believe to be fully in accord with the revealed mind of God on the subject. As we desire it to be pondered impartially, we shall (for the present) withhold the name of its author, and the denomination to which he belonged. A sharp spear needs no polish, and a helpful exposition of any aspect of the Truth should require no eminent human name to commend it to the members of the household of faith. This sermon on “Christian Patriotism”—or the duty of God's people towards their country—was preached from the text of Jeremiah 29:7.—A.W.P.

Sermon on Christian Patriotism from the early 1800s

“And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace”—Jeremiah 29:7

In the course of human events, cases may be expected to occur in which a serious mind may be at a loss with respect to the path of duty. Presuming, my brethren, that such may be the situation of some of you at this momentous crisis—a crisis in which your country, menaced by an unprincipled, powerful, and malignant foe, calls upon you to arm in its defence—I take the liberty of freely imparting to you my sentiments on the subject.

When a part of the Jewish people were carried captives to Babylon—ten years, or thereabouts, before the entire ruin of the city and temple—they must have felt at a loss in determining upon what was duty. Though Jeconiah, their king, was carried captive with them, yet the government was still continued under Zedekiah; and there were not wanting prophets, such as they were, who encouraged in them the hopes of a speedy return. To settle their minds on this subject, Jeremiah addressed the following letter to them: “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, unto all that are carried away captives, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem

unto Babylon, Build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them; Take ye wives, and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons, and give your daughters to husbands, that they may bear sons and daughters; that ye may be increased there, and not diminished. And seek the peace of the city whither I have caused you to be carried away captives, and pray unto the LORD for it: for in the peace thereof shall ye have peace" (Jer 29:4-7).

I do not suppose that the case of these people applies exactly to ours; but the difference is of such a nature as to heighten our obligations. *They* were in a foreign land—a land where there was nothing to excite their attachment, but everything to provoke their dislike. They had enjoyed all the advantages of freedom and independence, but were *now* reduced to a state of slavery. Nor were they enslaved only—to injury was added insult. They that led them captives required of them mirth, saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion" (Psa 137:3). Revenge, in such circumstances, must have seemed natural; and if a foreign invader, like Cyrus, had placed an army before their walls, it had been excusable; one would have thought, not only to have wished him success, but opportunity offered, to have joined an insurrection in aid of him—nothing like this is allowed. When Cyrus actually took this great city, it does not appear that the Jews did anything to assist him. Their duty was to seek the welfare of the city, and to pray to the Lord for it—leaving it to the great Disposer of all events to deliver them in His own time; and this not merely as being right, but wise: In *their* peace, "shall ye have peace" (Jer 29:7).

Now, if such was the duty of men in their circumstances, can there be any doubt with respect to *ours*? Ought we not to seek the good of our native land, the land of our father's sepulchers; a land where we are protected by mild and wholesome laws administered under a paternal prince; a land where civil and religious freedom are enjoyed in a higher degree than in any other country in Europe; a land where God has been known for many centuries as refuge; a land, in fine, where there are greater opportunities for propagating the Gospel—both at home and abroad—than in any nation under heaven. Need I add to this that the invader was to them a deliverer; but to us, beyond all doubt, would be a destroyer. Our object this evening will be partly to inquire into the duty of religious people towards their country; and partly to consider the motive by which it is enforced.

I inquire into the duty of God's people towards their country. Though, as Christians, we are not of the world and ought not to be conformed to it; yet being in it, we are under various obligations to those about us. As husbands, wives, parents, children, masters, servants, etc., we cannot be insensible that others have a *claim upon us*, as well as we upon them; and it is the same as members of a community united under one civil government. If we were rulers, our country would have a serious claim upon us *as rulers*; and as we are subjects, it has a serious claim upon us *as subjects*. The manner in which we discharge these relative duties contributes not a little to the formation of our character, both in the sight of God and man.

I. The *directions* given to the Jewish captives were comprised in two things: Seeking the peace of the city; and praying to the Lord for it.

These directions are very comprehensive, and apply to us much more forcibly than they did to the people to whom they were immediately addressed. Let us inquire, more particularly, what is included in them.

1. "*Seek the peace of the city*" (Jer 29:7). The term here rendered "peace" signifies not merely an exemption from wars and insurrections, but prosperity in general. It amounts, therefore, to saying, "Seek the good or *welfare* of the city." Such, brethren, is the conduct required of us—as men and as Christians. We ought to be patriots, or lovers, of our country. To prevent mistakes, however, it is proper to observe that the patriotism required of us is not that love of our country

which clashes with universal benevolence, or which seeks its prosperity at the expense of the general happiness of mankind. Such was the patriotism of Greece and Rome; and such is that of all others where Christian principle is not allowed to direct it. Such, I am ashamed to say, is that with which some have advocated the curse of negro slavery—it is necessary forsooth to the wealth of this country! No; if my country cannot prosper but at the expense of justice, humanity, and the happiness of mankind, let it be unprosperous! But this is not the case. Righteousness will be found to exalt a nation, and so to be a true wisdom. The prosperity which we are directed to seek in behalf of our country involves no ill to any one, except to those who shall attempt its overthrow. Let those who fear not God, nor regard man, engage in schemes of aggrandizement, and let sordid parasites pray for their success. *Our* concern is to cultivate that patriotism which harmonises with good will to men. O my country, I will lament thy faults! Yet with all thy faults, I will seek thy good; not only as a Briton, but as a Christian: For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will say, "Peace be within thee; because of the house of the Lord my God, I will seek thy good!"

If we seek the good of our country, we shall certainly *do nothing* and join nothing that tends to disturb its peace or *hinder its welfare*. Whoever engages in plots and conspiracies to overturn its constitution—we shall not. Whoever deals in inflammatory speeches, or in any manner, sows the seeds of discontent and disaffection—we shall not. Whoever labours to depreciate its governors, supreme or subordinate, in a manner tending to bring government itself into contempt—we shall not. Even in cases wherein we may be compelled to disapprove of measures, we shall either be silent, or express our disapprobation with respect and with regret. A dutiful son may see a fault in a father; but he will not take pleasure in exposing him. He that can employ his wit in degrading magistrates is not their friend, but their enemy; and he that is an enemy to magistrates is not far from being an enemy to magistracy; and of course, to this country. A good man may be aggrieved; and being so, may complain. Paul did so at Philippi. But the character of a *complainer* belongs only to those who walk after their own lusts.

If we seek the good of our country, we shall do everything in our power *to promote its welfare*. We shall not think it sufficient that we do it no harm, or that we stand still as neutrals in its difficulties. If, indeed, our spirits be tainted with disaffection, we shall be apt to think we do great things by standing aloof from conspiracies and refraining from inflammatory speeches; but this is no more than may be accomplished by the greatest traitor in the land, merely as a matter of prudence. It becomes Christians to bear positive good-will to their country, and to its government—considered *as government*, irrespective of the political party which may have the ascendancy. We may have our preferences, and that without blame; but they ought never to prevent a cheerful obedience to the laws, a respectful demeanour towards those who frame, and those who execute them; or a ready co-operation in every measure, which the being or well-being of the nation may require. The civil power, whatever political party is uppermost—while it maintains the great ends of government—ought at all times to be able to reckon upon religious people as its cordial friends. And if such we be, we shall be willing in times of difficulty to sacrifice private interests to public good, shall contribute of our substance without murmuring, and in cases of imminent danger, shall be willing to expose *even our lives* in its defence.

As the last of these particulars is a subject which deeply interests us at the present juncture; and I shall be excused if I endeavour to establish the grounds on which I conceive its obligation to rest. We know that the father of the faithful—who was only a sojourner in the land of Canaan when his kinsman Lot, with his family, were taken captives by a body of plunderers—armed his trained servants, pursued the victors, and bravely recovered the spoil. It was on this occasion that Melchizedek blessed him, saying, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven

and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand"! (Gen 14:19-20). Perhaps it will be said, "This was antecedent to the times of the New Testament." Jesus taught His disciples not to resist evil; and when Peter drew his sword, He ordered him to put it up again, saying, "for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword" (Mat 26:52). *[To be completed in the August issue.]*

WELCOME TIDINGS

“Praise ye the LORD” (Psa 106:1 and in *many* other places!). The fact that this exhortation occurs so often in the Scriptures denotes that for the saints to be thus engaged is pleasing to the Lord, and such is indeed the case—for He has plainly declared, “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me” (Psa 50:23). It also imports that it becomes the saint to be so occupied; and this, too, borne out by “praise is comely for the upright” (Psa 33:1). Further, we may surely infer from this Divine call being made so often that praising the Lord is not to be an occasional exercise, but a frequent one. If we are to “Rejoice in the Lord alway” (Php 4:4) and “In every thing give thanks” (1Th 5:18), then obviously, we should be constantly praising Him. Have we not abundant cause so to do? Can we make any better employ of our faculties? Is there not something seriously wrong with us if we are not daily, hourly, “singing and making melody” in our hearts “to the Lord” (Eph 5:19)?

“Praise ye the LORD.” Does not the frequent repetition of this injunction also suggest that we are *tardy* in performing this delightful task—that we need to be reminded of it again and again? God knows that His people are now in a howling wilderness; that often, they are sorely tried by circumstances, that they carry about with them a sinful nature, which occasions many a groan; nevertheless, they are not to hang their harps upon the willows and rob Him of His due. They are journeying unto the Father’s house; He is making all their tribulations work together for their good; He has provided a Fountain “for sin and for uncleanness” (Zec 13:1). They must not suffer the trials of the way to overwhelm them, but set over against those the privileges and portion, which is theirs in Christ; and praise Him for the same.

“Praise ye the LORD.” In these days, when there is so much to distress them in the world, and when the speed and pressure of modern life is so exacting and enervating, there is real danger of the saints failing to rend unto the Lord daily that praise and thanksgiving to which He is so just entitled. It will help them to discharge this pleasant duty, if they sit down and try to count their many spiritual and temporal blessings. As the Psalmist said in another place, “while I was musing [meditating upon God’s goodness] the fire burned” (Psa 39:3). Let the Christian reader join with the editor and his wife in praising the Lord, because He deigns to continue blessing these pages unto one and another of His scattered sheep—a few of whose testimonies we now append.

“The Misses introduced me to your ‘Studies’ and I have derived much help and pleasure from them. My work in the army is such that I am very much on my own; and consequently, your magazines have been what of might call a little sanctuary” (One in the Australian Forces).

“I am deeply grateful to Almighty God for having made your acquaintance, even though it be through the medium of the penned word, for He has used you in wonderful way to further unfold the Scriptures to me—first and chiefly concerning the perversion of the Gospel, which is widely prevalent in the more Fundamental (?) of professedly Christian circles today. They would have faith without works, grace without holiness, love and no wrath...Again I say that I am grateful to Him for awakening me to this great delusion, which has swept the professing church; and through Him and in His name, I extend to you my thanks and appreciation for your ministry to me” (One in the U.S. Army).

“I wish to express my thanks to you and your wife for the help I have received in reading the ‘Studies.’ They have been a great source of encouragement and profit to me in my present circumstances; and I pray that in the goodness of God, your labours in study and meditation will bear much fruit in increased exercises in the hearts of those who profess to know and serve Christ. With Christian love (One in the Royal Air Force).

“I am in receipt of all the Studies for 1944, for which I sincerely thank you. Again and again have I enjoyed them, especially when one is away from all Christian fellowship and means of grace. The Lord richly bless your work through another year” (One in the Royal Navy).

“I receive much spiritual help from your writings” (Canadian soldier).

“At the moment, I am so busy on war work, fourteen and a half hours per day (Sundays excluded), that I find my brain and mind very tired at the end of the day. So a helpful spiritual ministry like yours is a tonic to my soul” (Munition Worker). —*How that puts to shame so many who work much shorter hours, and yet complain they have “no time” for solid and serious reading!*

“In thinking on the ‘Studies,’ I cannot but express how much your work has meant to my wife and me. I feel as though we were one in fellowship. We have grown to know and respect you highly, not only as an able expositor of His Word, but as a friend. By that word, ‘friend,’ we mean all it connotes. When the mail arrives bringing your Studies, we feel as though you too had stepped through our door to pay us a visit.” — *Many of our readers feel the same way.*

“Thank you for the ‘Studies’ and their God-given messages. They are a great blessing to me and your opening up of God’s precious Word is most edifying. Your choice of articles for God’s beloved people in these days calls for their thanksgiving” (Welsh Reader).

“With grateful thanks, I forward herewith a contribution to the work of the ‘Studies,’ which I continue to receive; and which are just as profitable as ever, and probably more searching than ever” (New Zealand Reader).

“Nearly all modern religious literature lacks the solemn warning so often found in your articles.” “We are grateful for the heart-searching truths ministered to us.” “Your repeated warnings against the exceeding sinfulness of sin, I find very suited to my case” (Three Australian Readers).

“Those of us who are isolated look forward to ‘Studies,’ as they contain food for our souls: We get not only doctrine, but reproof—something we are sorely in need of, but I know of no other religious magazine which gives it” (Canadian Reader).

“I do not believe I have missed one issue of these Studies, which seems very wonderful to me. I am still enjoying them very much: So many articles seem written just for me” (Alaskan Reader).

“Thank you so much for the ‘Studies’—not one issue is missing. I do enjoy re-reading the many articles that are nourishing to my soul. I praise the Lord for them, for it is He alone who gives you the light” (U.S.A.).

“My much esteemed and faithful brother, may the blessings and mercies of a three-one-God continue to rest upon thee. As the days go by, it appears that the depth and richness of your work increases. I cannot tell whether the difference is in me or you—I hope both. Often when reading the ‘Studies,’ the thankfulness of my heart overflows” (U.S.A. Preacher).

“There are many things being written these days on the Scriptures, but I can say that I find your writings more helpful and stimulating than any others. I trust you may long be spared to continue this good work” (Canadian Preacher).

“My friends and I read your ‘Studies’ with relish, and our wish is that the God of blessings will continue to bless readers and writer. In this ‘day of small things,’ His people rejoice to find a faithful witness” (Scottish Reader).

We might quote letters received from half a dozen young preachers in various parts of the world, but lack of space prevents. Not only should these unsolicited testimonials evoke praise unto the Lord for deigning to make use of our pen, but definite prayer too—that He may graciously *increase the circulation* of this magazine, bring us into touch with many more whose hearts He has prepared for His message through us, that they also may share in the blessing and enjoy with us some of the green pastures provided for His sheep.

Thankfully yours, *A. W. and V. E. Pink*

[Note: while subscriptions to the Studies were in the 400 to 500 range for most of its years, and grew to approximately 1,000 at its zenith before shrinking back, the *modern printings* have steadily grown, passing 2,000 subscriptions in North America in October of 2006. Praise to our great God!]

