

**Volume 16—Studies in the Scriptures—No. 8****August, 1937****THE SPIRIT FRUCTIFYING.**

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit . . . Wherefore by their *fruits* ye shall know them” (Matt. 7:17, 18, 20). The fruit they bear is that which distinguishes the children of God from the children of the Devil. This “fruit” is the temper or disposition wrought in the elect by the Holy Spirit, which is manifested by them, severally, “according to the measure of the gift of Christ” (Eph. 4:7). The Spirit fructifies the regenerate by conforming them to the image of Christ: first to His graces, and then to His example. The lovely virtues found in them do not issue from the depraved nature of fallen man, but are supernaturally inwrought by God.

There are three leading passages in the New Testament on this subject. John 15 names the *conditions* of fruitfulness: union with Christ, purging by the Father, abiding in Christ, and Christ and His Word abiding in us. Galatians 5 furnishes a *description* of the fruit itself. 2 Peter 1:5-8 states the order of fruit or the *process* of its cultivation. “In the figure of the Vine, the Holy Spirit is not mentioned, but in comparing Himself to the Vine and His disciples to the Branches, the Tree corresponds to the Body, and the Life to His Spirit. The diffusion of life is the work of the Holy Spirit, and the fruit by which the Father is glorified is the fruit of the Spirit. Apart from Christ there is neither life nor fruit, but without the Spirit of Christ there can be neither union or abiding. Our Lord does not specify the fruit. What He emphasises is the fact that it *is* fruit, and that it is fruit *directly from Himself*” (S. Chadwick).

“The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance” (Gal. 5:22, 23). These are *graces* of the Spirit as distinguished from the *gifts* of the Spirit, enumerated in 1 Corinthians 12, and which we hope to consider in our next. They are holy and heavenly dispositions with the conduct which results therefrom. The Apostle begins with the principal characteristics of the spiritual mind, and then passes on to its operation and manifestation in personal conduct, social virtues, and practical behaviour. A threefold reason may be suggested why these spiritual graces are termed “fruit.” First, because all grace is *derived* from the Spirit as fruit issues from the life of a plant. Second, to denote the *pleasantness* of grace, for what is more delightful than sweet and wholesome fruit? Third, to signify the *advantage* redounding to those who have the Spirit; as the owners are enriched by the fruit produced from their gardens and orchards, so believers are enriched by the fruits of holiness.

In the use of the singular number, “the fruit (rather than ‘fruits’) of the Spirit,” emphasis is placed upon the *unity* of His operations: producing one harmonious whole—in contrast from the products of the flesh, which ever tend to discord and chaos. These virtues are not like so many separate flowers in a bouquet, as the variegated petals of one lovely flower exhibiting different shades and forms. A rainbow is one, yet in it all the primary colours are beautifully blended together. These graces which the Spirit imparts to a renewed soul are distinguishable, but they are inseparable. In some believers one grace predominates more than another—as meekness in Moses, patience in Job, love in John—yet all are present and to some extent active.

Galatians 5:22, 23 enumerates nine of the graces communicated by the Spirit. Some have suggested that the last eight are but varied expressions of the first. That “Joy is love

exulting, Peace is love in repose, Longsuffering is love on trial, Gentleness is love in society, Goodness is love in action, Faith is love in endurance, Meekness is love at school, and Temperance is love in discipline” (A. T. Pierson). But while love is, admittedly, the greatest of all the graces, yet 1 Corinthians 13:13 shows that it is but one of several. Personally, we prefer the older classification which divided the nine graces into three threes: the first three—love, joy, peace—being Godwards in their exercise; the second three—longsuffering, gentleness goodness—being exercised manwards; and the last three—fidelity, meekness, temperance—being exercised self-ward.

“Love”: the Apostle begins with that which flows directly from God (Rom. 5:5), and without which there can be no fellowship with Him or pleasing of Him. “Joy” in God, in the knowledge of pardon, in communion with Christ, in the duties of piety, in the hope of Heaven. “Peace”: of conscience, rest of heart, tranquillity of mind. “Longsuffering” when provoked and injured by others, exercising a magnanimous forbearance toward the faults and failing of our fellows. “Gentleness” rendered “kindness” in 2 Corinthians 6:6, a gracious benignity, the opposite of a harsh, crabbed, and brutal temper. “Goodness” or beneficence, seeking to help and benefit others, without expecting any return or reward. “Faith” or more accurately “faithfulness”: being trustworthy, honest, keeping your promises. “Meekness” or yieldedness, the opposite of self-will and self-assertiveness. “Temperance” or self-control: being moderate in all things, ruling one’s spirit, denying self.

“In newspaper English, the passage would read something like this; The Fruit of the Spirit is an affectionate, lovable, disposition, a radiant spirit and a cheerful temper, a tranquil mind and a quiet manner, a forbearing patience in provoking circumstances and with trying people, a sympathetic insight and tactful helpfulness, generous judgment and a big-souled charity, loyalty and reliability under all circumstances, humility that forgets self in the joy of others, in all things self-mastered and self-controlled, which is the final mark of perfecting. This is the kind of character that is the Fruit of the Spirit. Everything is in the word Fruit. It is not by striving, but by abiding; not by worrying, but by trusting; not of works, but of faith” (S. Chadwick). And, as our passage goes on to say, “Against such there is no law” (Gal. 5:23): that which the Law enjoins the Spirit imparts, so that there is perfect harmony between the Law and the Gospel.

But here too there is to be a concurrence between the Christian and the Spirit; our responsibility is to cherish and cultivate our graces, and to resist and reject everything which opposes and hinders them. Fruit is neither our invention nor our product, nevertheless it requires our “diligence” as 2 Peter 1:5 plainly indicates. A neglected garden grows weeds in plenty, and then its flowers and fruits are quickly crowded out. The gardener has to be continually alert and active. Turn to and ponder Psalm 1 and see *what* has to be avoided, and *what* has to be done, if the believer is to “bring forth his fruit in his season.” Re-read John 15 and note the conditions of fruitfulness, and then turn the same into earnest prayer. The Lord, in His grace, make both writer and reader successful horticulturists in the spiritual realm.—A.W.P.

### The Epistle to the Hebrews.

116. *Outside the Camp*: 13:13, 14.

In last month's article we endeavoured to make clear to the reader exactly what was "the camp" from which the Apostle exhorted the Hebrews to go forth. The more accurately a term be defined, the less likelihood of its being wrongly employed. It was at this point the present writer failed in an article which appeared in an issue nearly ten years ago—many a sound sermon has been marred by heading it with the wrong text. Dwelling upon many of the incidental analogies which exist between much that now obtains in Christendom and that which marked Judaism of old, we failed to concentrate upon that which was essential and fundamental, and hence, made a wrong application of this particular term "the camp." That which made the Judaism of Paul's day to differ so radically from its worst state in the time of the Prophets, was, that it had hated, rejected, and murdered the incarnate Son of God.

It is *that* particular point, the Jews' casting out of Christ, anathematizing Him, condemning Him to a malefactor's death, which must guide us when seeking to identify the modern counterpart of that "camp." There is, really, no exact replica on earth today of that Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus: certainly neither Romanism—blasphemous and horrible as are many of its dogmas and practices—nor the most degenerate branches of Protestantism—rotten as some of them are in doctrine and works—can rightly be designated the present-day "camp." No, as we pointed out last month, that which most closely resembles it, that which in principle is essentially like thereto, is the secular, profane *world*. Its unregenerate and ungodly members do not profess to love Christ: the very mention of Him is hateful to them: they desire to banish Him entirely from their schemes and thoughts—except when they take His holy name in vain.

Next, we sought to show *in what sense* the Lord requires His people to go forth "outside the camp," that is, separate themselves from the ungodly, from them who hate and revile Christ. This, as we saw, is not to be understood "literally" or physically, but metaphorically or morally. It is not a local withdrawal from the world, but a religious and spiritual one. In other words, God does not bid His people be fanatics and lead the lives of hermits. Taking refuge in monasteries and convents is the Devil's perversion of this important practical truth. No; the Christian is still left *in* the world, but he must not be *of* it. Its policy and maxims must not regulate him, its pleasures and attractions must not capture his heart, its friendship must not be sought; its politics are no concern of his. In heart and soul-interests he is a stranger here, and is to conduct himself as a pilgrim passing through this scene—"using this world, but not abusing it" (1 Cor. 7:31).

Then we pointed out that in going *forth* from the camp the Christian goes *unto* Christ: it is the twofoldness of the act which the word "conversion" connotes. Yet it is not without reason that the Holy Spirit has worded our text as it is: there is a particular emphasis in it which requires to be noted. It is not "Let us go forth therefore without the camp unto Him," but "*unto Him* without the camp." The difference is something more than verbal. It stresses the fact that *Christ Himself* must be the grand object before the heart, and then the poor baubles of this world will not possess much attraction for us. If He is not, then, though we may become aesthetes, there will be no contentment, still less joy: our case would be like that of many of the Israelites who had "gone forth" from Egypt, yet continued to lust after its fleshpots.

To go forth unto Christ without the camp means for the believer to make a complete break from his former manner of life, to renounce everything which is opposed to Christ, to relinquish whatever would hinder communion with Him. In a word, the exhortation of our text is only another way of presenting that declaration of our Lord's, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). Sin must be mortified, the flesh with its affections and lusts crucified, the world forsaken, and the example which Christ has left us diligently followed. So, then, going forth unto Him outside the camp is not a single act, done once for all at conversion, but, an *habitual* thing, a constant attitude of life. The cross must be taken up by the Christian "daily": Luke 9:23.

Obedience to this injunction involves "bearing Christ's reproach." The believer is called unto fellowship with Christ: now "fellowship with His sufferings" (Phil. 3:10), in the future with His glory. That "reproach" assumes different forms and has various degrees in different locations and periods, according as God is pleased to restrain the enmity of the wicked against His people. But in every age and in every place it has been verified that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer *persecution*" (2 Tim. 3:12). That "persecution," that "reproach" of Christ may be cruel afflictions such as the early Christians experienced; or it may take the milder form of sneers, ridicule, and ostracism, which sensitive souls feel keenly. As Christ declared "The servant is not greater than his Lord. If they have persecuted Me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20). One reason why God permits this is because His people are so prone to flirt with the world, and if we will not separate from them, He often causes them to give us the cold shoulder and oppose us.

The flesh shrinks from and desires to escape such opposition. It is natural for us to want to be well thought of and nicely treated by everyone. But let the shrinking Christian call to mind what his Master endured for his sake. In the types, the sin offering was burned without the camp—far off from the holy of holies where Jehovah had His seat—to represent the sinner's final separation from God, his being cast into "the outer darkness," there to suffer the vengeance of eternal fire. And Christ endured the equivalent of *that* on the Cross, during those three hours of awful darkness. He bore the fearful load of His people's sins, and was deprived of the comforts of God's presence. For Christ it meant entering the place of distance from God, but for *us* to "go forth without the camp" means going "unto Him"; for Him it entailed enduring the curse, for us it involves naught but Divine blessing! Then let us cleave to Him despite the world's scorn, and stand by His cause on earth no matter what the cost to us.

But let us now consider by what means this duty of going forth unto Christ is discharged. As we pointed out in last month's article, it is an act of *the soul* rather than of the body which is here in view. But to particularize. First, the soul of the believer goes forth to Christ *by prayer*, for real prayer is the breathing of the heart after Him and turning unto Him. Its first cry is "Lord, save me, I perish." There is the daily request for Him to make Himself more real to the heart, to grant us closer communion with Himself, and to remove those things which hinder the same. There is the asking Him to teach us how to draw from His fullness, to make us more obedient, to conform us more fully to His holy image. "Let Him kiss me with the kisses of His mouth: for Thy love is better than wine" (Song. 1:2) is the language of one whose heart is "going forth unto Christ outside the

camp”—seeking from Him that which is infinitely superior to the best this poor world affords.

Second, it is the motion of *faith*. Christ is the grand Object of faith, and He can only be known and enjoyed now by faith. It was so at our first conversion; it is so throughout the entire Christian course. “The life which I now live in the flesh,” said the Apostle, “I live by the *faith* of the Son of God (faith in Him), who loved me, and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 2:20). When faith is inactive, there is no going forth of the soul unto Christ, no real prayer, no communion with Him. But when faith is operative the heart turns unto Him as instinctively as the needle of the compass does unto the north. When faith is sickly and listless the things of this world gain power over us: either its pleasures attract, or its cares distract us. But when faith is healthy and vigorous, the soul “mounts up with wings as eagles” and “runs and is not weary.” It is *faith* which makes Christ real and precious to the soul. Then let us be more diligent in guarding against those things which weaken and quench it.

Third, going forth unto Christ outside the camp is *the act of hope*. This is the particular spiritual grace which keeps the heart of the believer from falling into abject despair. There are times when he is sorely tried and dismayed: sin rages within, the accusations of the Holy Law sting his conscience, and Satan tries hard to make him believe that all is lost—that having abused his privileges, sinned against much light, turned Divine grace into lasciviousness, there is no remedy. So it seems to the cast-down soul: pray he cannot, and as he reads the Scriptures, instead of finding comfort, every page condemns him. Then the Spirit applies some promise, and a little encouragement follows: but conscience still smites, and he groans. Now it is that *hope* acts: Christ had mercy on the leper, the publican, the dying thief; He is full of compassion, I will cast myself afresh on His pity. So too hope looks beyond this scene—with all its disappointments, sorrows, and sufferings—and anticipates the time when we shall be “forever with the Lord.”

Fourth, going forth unto Christ without the camp is also *the work of love*. The love of God which the Spirit sheds abroad in the hearts of the regenerate is something more than a beautiful sentiment: it is an operative principle. Love yearns for the company of the Beloved: it cannot find satisfaction elsewhere. Christ is not to be met with in worldly circles, and therefore when the heart of the believer is in a healthy state, it seeks unto its Beloved outside the camp. A word from *His* lips, a smile from *His* face, an embrace from *His* arms, is prized above rubies. To sit at *His* feet and drink from the fountain of *His* love, is better than heaps of silver and gold. Christ is precious to those whose sins have been removed by *His* blood, and their affections “go forth” unto Him—not so fervently and frequently as they should, or as they desire; nevertheless, there are seasons in the life of *every* Christian when he is permitted to lean his head upon the Saviour’s bosom. Christ’s love to *His* own attracts their love to Him.

Fifth, going forth unto Christ outside the camp is *the surrender of the will to Him*. There is a change of masters; service to the prince of this world is renounced, and the Lordship of Christ accepted. There is an enlisting under *His* banner, a putting on of *His* uniform, a submission to *His* captaincy, and we act according to *His* will. How different is all of this from what many suppose our text signifies! One may identify himself with those who claim to have gone forth from “all the man-made sects and systems,” and yet the heart be quite dead toward God. Or, one may belong to the most orthodox church, subscribe to its doctrines, adopt their language, echo its groans, and have not a spark of

grace in the heart. One may separate from all the world's politics, pastimes and pleasures, and have no love for Christ. There must be the exercise of faith, the stirrings of hope, the actings of love, the surrender of the will, and walking in the path of obedience, in order to meet the terms of our text.

“For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14). Four questions are suggested by these words: what is their relation to the preceding verse? What is signified by “no continuing *city*”? What is the “one to come” that we seek? How or in what do we seek it? That there is a close connection between verse 14 and the previous one is obvious from its opening word. Now that connection is twofold: first, verse 14 supplies two further reasons to enforce the duty specified in verse 13—additional to those implied in verses 10-12; second, verse 14 may also be regarded as explaining and amplifying the language of verse 13.

The connection of verse 14 with verse 13 will be more apparent as we turn to the second question and consider what is signified by “For here have we no continuing city.” Obviously, the “city” is used here metaphorically, as a figure of that which is strong and stable: it is that which provides refuge and rest to the great majority of earth's inhabitants. “Change and decay in all around I see” said the poet: there is nothing lasting, durable, dependable in this world. In Genesis 4:17 we read that Cain “builded a city,” and where is it?—destroyed thousands of years ago by the Flood. Thebes, Nineveh, Babylon were all powerful and imposing cities in their day, but where are they now? They no longer exist, yea, their very sites are disputed. Such is this world, my reader: “the fashion of this world *passeth away*” (1 Cor. 7:31), and one day “the earth also and the works that are therein shall be *burned up*” (2 Peter 3:10).

The things of this earth are transitory: that which the natural man values so highly, and sells his soul to obtain, soon vanishes away. All that is mundane is unstable and uncertain: *that* is the meaning, in brief, of “here have we no continuing city.” There is however an emphasis in these words which we must not miss: it is *not* simply “here *there is* no continuing city” but “here *have we*” none—something which can be predicated of none but believers. True, the worldling has none in reality, but in his imagination, his plans, his affections, he has—he sets his heart upon the things of this world and acts as though he would enjoy them always: “Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names” (Psa. 49:11). And how is the instability of everything mundane to affect and influence the Christian? Thus: he is to renounce them in his heart—leave “the camp”—*that* is the connection with verse 13.

“For here have we no continuing city” (Heb. 13:14). “A city is the centre of men's interests and privileges, the residence and seat of their conversation. Hereby are they freed from the condition of strangers and pilgrims; and have all that rest and security in this world they are capable. For those who have no higher aims nor ends than this world, a city is their all. Now it is not said of believers absolutely that they belonged to no city, had none that was theirs in common with other men; for our Apostle himself pleaded that he was a citizen of no mean city. This is intimated, as we shall see, in the restriction of the assertion: a *continuing* city. But it is spoken on other accounts” (J. Owen). What those “other accounts” are we shall see presently, meanwhile we will consider the more general meaning.

In His providential dealings with them, God often gives His people painful reminders of the fact that “here have we no continuing city.” We are prone to be at ease in Zion, to fix our hearts on things below, to settle down in this world. We like to feel we are anchored for a while at least, and make our plans accordingly. But God blows upon our schemes and compels us to take up the stakes of our tents, saying, “Arise ye, and depart; for *this* is not your rest: because it is polluted” (Micah 2:10). A significant word on this is found in “As an eagle *stirreth up her nest*, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings: *so* the LORD alone did lead him” (Deut. 32:11, 12). Ah, my reader, it is not a pleasant experience to have our earthly “nest” stirred up, to have our rest disturbed, and be obliged to change our abode; but as that is essential if the eaglets are to be taught to use their wings, so it is necessary for the Christian if he is to live as a stranger and pilgrim in this scene.

God has called His people unto fellowship with Christ, and that means something more than participating in His life and receiving His peace and joy: it also involves entering into His experiences—enduring the wrath of God alone excepted. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth *before* them” (John 10:4). That denotes two things: that we are not called to tread any path which He did not Himself traverse, and that we are to experience something of His sorrows: “Ye are they which have continued with Me in My temptations” or “trials” (Luke 22:28). Now what was Christ’s experience in this world? Even as a child He had no rest here; His parents had to carry Him down into Egypt in order to escape the malice of Herod. Trace the record of His earthly ministry, and how long do we find Him abiding in any once place? He was constantly on the move. “Jesus therefore, being *wearied with His journey*, sat thus on the well” (John 4:6), and in some form or other His people are required to drink from that same cup. If the Lord of Glory “had not where to lay His head” when in this world, shall we deem it strange that God so often disturbs our rest?

But let us consider the more specific meaning of our text. First, the Christian has no city on earth which is the centre of Divine worship, whereunto it is confined, as had been the case with Judaism. Herein the Apostle points another contrast. After the Israelites had wandered for many years in the wilderness, they were brought to rest in Canaan, where Jerusalem became their grand centre, and of that city the Jews had for long boasted. But it was not to continue, for within ten years of this Epistle being written, that city was destroyed. How this verse gives the lie to the pretensions of Rome! No, the Christian has something far better than an insecure and non-continuing city on earth, even the Father’s House, with its many mansions, eternal in the heavens!

Second, the believer has no city on earth which supplies him with those things which are his ultimate aim: deliverance from all his enemies, an end to all his trials, an eternal resting-place. His “commonwealth” or “citizenship” is “in Heaven” (Phil. 3:20 R.V.). The Christian does not regard this world as his fixed abode or final home. This is what gives point to the preceding exhortation and explains the force of the opening “For” in verse 14. The fact that everything here is unstable and uncertain should spur the Christian to go forth from the camp—in his heart renounce the world. And further, it should make him willing to “bear the reproach of Christ,” even though that involves being driven from his birthplace and compelled to wander about without any fixed residence on earth. Finally, it gives point, as we shall see, to the last clause of our text.

“But we seek one to come” (Heb. 13:14). In view of what has been before us, it is quite clear that the “one,” the City, that we seek, is Heaven itself, various aspects of which are suggested by the figure here used of it. It is an abiding, heavenly, everlasting “City,” which the believer seeks, and the same is referred to again and again in this Epistle—in contrast from the temporal and transitory nature of Judaism—under various terms and figures. This “City” is the same as the “better and enduring substance” in Heaven of 10:34. It is that “Heavenly Country” of 11:16. It is “the City of the living God” of 12:22, the seat and centre of Divine worship. It is the same as “those things which cannot be shaken” of 12:27. It is “the Kingdom which cannot be moved,” in its final form, of 12:28. It is the “Inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us” (1 Peter 1:4).

An earlier reference to this grand object of the believer’s desire and quest was before us in “he looked for a City which hath foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). Those “foundations” are, first, the everlasting good-will and pleasure of God toward His people, which is the basis of all His dealings with them. Second, God’s foreordination, whereby He predestined His elect unto eternal glory, concerning which we are told “The foundation of God standeth sure, having this seal, The Lord knoweth them that are His” (2 Tim. 2:19). Third, the Everlasting Covenant of free, rich, and sovereign Grace, which God entered into with the Head and Surety of the elect, and which is “ordered in all things and sure.” Fourth, the infinite merits and purchase of Christ, for “other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 3:11). Fifth, the whole being confirmed by and resting upon the immutable stability of God’s promise and oath: Hebrews 6:17-20.

In addition to the few brief remarks we made upon the signification of this figure of the “City” when expounding 11:10, we may note the following—bearing in mind those characteristics of a “city” which specially obtained in ancient times. First, a city was a place of safety and security: “let us go to Jerusalem for fear of the army of the Chaldeans, and for fear of the army of the Syrians: so we dwell at Jerusalem” (Jer. 35:11). In Heaven there will be no wicked men to persecute, no Devil to tempt. Second, a city is compact, being the concentration of numerous houses and homes. So of Heaven Christ declared that in it are “many mansions.” There will dwell together forever the myriads of holy angels and the entire Church of God. Third, in a city is stored all manner of provisions and needful commodities; so in Heaven there is nothing lacking to minister unto the delights of its inhabitants.

Finally, as a “city” on earth is the centre of the world’s interests and privileges, the resting place of travelers and those who go abroad, so Heaven will be the grand Terminal to the wanderings and journeyings of the Christian. His pilgrimage is ended, for Home is reached. On earth he was a stranger and sojourner, but now he has reached the Father’s House. There he will meet with no hardships, encounter none to whom he is a hated foreigner, and no longer have to earn his daily bread by the sweat of his brow. Unbroken rest, perfect freedom, unassailable security, congenial society, unconceivable delights, are now his portion forever. Faith then gives place to sight, hope to fruition, grace is swallowed up in glory, and we are “forever with the Lord,” beholding His glory, bathing in the ocean of His love.

How the anticipation of this should make us set our affection on things above, spur us on to run the race before us, cause us to drop every weight which hinders us in running!



How the consideration and contemplation of that “City” should work powerfully in us to look and long, and prepare us for the same! This brings us to ponder for a moment the meaning of “but we *seek* one to come.” This, of course, does not signify that the believer is searching after that which is unknown, but endeavouring to obtain it. It is the treading of that Narrow Way which leads to Heaven, and that with diligence and desire, which is hereby denoted. “And God hath prepared a city of rest for us, so it is our duty continually to endeavour the attainment of it, in the ways of His appointment. The main business of believers in this world is diligently to seek after the attainments of eternal rest with God, and this is the character whereby they may be known” (John Owen).

Here, then, is the *use* which the believer makes of the uncertainty and instability of everything in this world: his heart is fixed on the Home above, and to get safely there is his great concern. The word “seek” in our text is a very strong one: it is used in “after all these things (the material necessities of this life) do the Gentiles seek” (Matt. 6:32)—i.e., seek with concentrated purpose, earnest effort, untiring zeal. The same word is also rendered “labour” in Hebrews 4:11: the Christian deems no task too arduous, no sacrifice too much, no loss too great, if he may but “*win* Christ” (Phil. 3:8). He knows that Heaven will richly compensate him for all the toils and troubles of the journey which lead thither. “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev. 3:12)—A.W.P.

### **The Life of David.**

#### *68. His being Befriended.*

In working out His own eternal design, in ministering to the spiritual and temporal needs of His people, and in delivering them from their enemies, God acts as sovereign, employing subordinate agents or dispensing with them as He pleases. That He is *not* restrained by the lack of means is evident from His feeding two million Israelites in the wilderness for the space of forty years, by giving them bread from Heaven; and from other signal instances recorded in His Word. Nevertheless, generally, He is pleased to make use of means in the accomplishment of His everlasting decrees. Oftentimes those means are very feeble ones, altogether inadequate in themselves for accomplishing the ends they do—to show us that their sufficiency lies in Him who deigns to make use of them. Where human agents are employed by God, their unmeetness and unworthiness is often very apparent, and this, that we may glory not in them, but in the One who condescends to place His treasure in earthen vessels. Unless this principle be clearly recognized by us, we are very apt to stumble at the manifest faults in the instruments God employs.

God has never had but one perfect Servant on this earth, and His surpassing excellency is made the more conspicuous by the numerous imperfections of all others. Yet we must not take delight in looking for or dwelling upon the blemishes of those God made use of—like unclean birds seeking carrion to feed upon. Who are we, so full of sin ourselves, that we should throw stones at others? On the other hand, the faults recorded in Scripture of those whom God used in various ways, must not be made a shelter behind which we hide, in order to excuse our own sins. It is the bearing in mind of these obvious rules which often occasions a real difficulty to the minister of God, whether his preaching be oral or written. It is his duty to use *as warnings* the faults of Biblical characters; yet, alas, in doing so, he frequently has occasion to *condemn himself*; yet that is beneficial if it truly humbles him before God.

We are now to consider the means used by God in delivering His servant from the murderous designs of his enemies. If there had been a Jonathan in Saul's palace to plead his cause and give him intelligence of his father's plans, so now God raised up an Hushai at the headquarters of Absalom to render him aid and forward him notice of what was impending. Reliable messengers to carry these important tidings from him to David were present in the persons of the two priests, whom David had sent back to Jerusalem in order to there serve his interests; though they had been obliged to lodge outside the city at En-rogal, where a servant-girl communicated, in turn, with them. Yet one other link in the chain was required in order for the contact to be established: the two priests were seen as they started out on their mission, and were pursued by Absalom's men; but a protector was raised up for them, and they escaped. Thus, in this one instance God made use of a prominent politician, two priests, a maid-servant, and a farmer and his wife.

"Then said Absalom, Call now Hushai the Archite also, and let us hear likewise what he saith. And when Hushai was come to Absalom, Absalom spake unto him, saying, Ahithophel hath spoken after this manner: shall we do after his saying? if not; speak thou" (2 Sam. 17:5, 6). Let it not be forgotten that "the counsel of Ahithophel, which he counselled in those days, was as if a man had inquired at the oracle of God: so was all the counsel of Ahithophel both with David and with Absalom" (16:23). Is it not, then, truly remarkable that Absalom did not act promptly on his advise, instead of now conferring Hushai; the more so the plan propounded by Ahithophel had "pleased Absalom well, and

all the elders of Israel” (v. 4). There is only one satisfactory explanation: God had decreed otherwise! This is far more, my reader, than an incident in ancient history: it furnishes an example of *how* God regulates the affairs of nations today. Have we not witnessed individuals as devoid of all natural affections, as godless, as ruthless, as unscrupulous as was Absalom, who have *forced themselves* into the high places of national and international affairs!?

Yes, my reader, what the Holy Spirit has recorded here in 2 Samuel 17 is something of much greater importance than an episode which transpired thousands of years ago. The anointed eye may discern in and through it the light of Heaven being shed upon the political affairs of earth. God governs as truly in the houses of legislature and in the secret conferences of rulers and diplomats, as He does the elements and the heavenly bodies: He it is who rules their selfish schemings and overrules the counter plans of others. It was so here in Jerusalem in the long ago; it is so, just as actually now, at London, Washington, Paris, Moscow, Berlin, and Rome. The very reason why the Spirit has chronicled our incident in the imperishable pages of Holy Writ is that God’s people in all succeeding generations might know that “the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whosoever He will” (Dan. 4:17, 25, 32)—alas, that through the ignorance and unfaithfulness of the modern pulpit so many believers are now deprived of that comforting assurance.

God’s Word is a *living* Word, and not an obsolete history of things which took place in the far-distant past. It is to our own irreparable loss if we fail to turn its light upon the mysteries of life and the “dark places of the earth.” And surely there are no darker places than the conference chambers of politicians and international diplomats: God “setteth up over the kingdom of men, *the basest* of men” (Dan. 4:17), where His claims and the interests of His people are either totally ignored or blatantly defied; yet, even *there* the Most High is supreme, and has *His* way. Only so far are they allowed to go in their evil schemings and greedy plannings. If on the one hand there is a bloodthirsty Ahithophel (a military leader) who urges the modern dictator to the shedding of innocent blood, on the other hand God raises up an Hushai (though his name may not appear in our newspapers), who restrains and checks by advising cautious delay, and *his* counsel is made (by God) to thwart or modify the more extreme measures of the former. In the Day to come we shall find that 2 Samuel 17 has often been duplicated in the politics of this world, particularly in those of Europe.

“And Hushai said unto Absalom, The counsel that Ahithophel hath given is not good at this time” (v. 7). Hushai was put to rather a severe test. In the first place, Absalom had already evidenced some suspicion of his bonafides, or loyalty to himself, when he first appeared on the scene (16:17). In the second place, Ahithophel had just advanced a plan which met with general approval. And in the third place, to criticize the scheme of Ahithophel might well be to increase Absalom’s suspicion against himself. But he stood his ground, and at some risk to himself, did what he could to befriend David. He came right out and boldly challenged the counsel of his rival, yet he prudently took the edge off the blow by his modification of “at this time.” His language was skillfully chosen; he did not say “such a course would be downright madness,” but only it “is not good”—it is unwise to employ harsher language than is absolutely necessary. Thus Absalom discovered that his counselors did not agree—it is diversity of views and policies that a balance is preserved in the affairs of human government.

“For, said Hushai, thou knowest thy father and his men, that they be mighty men, and they be chafed in their minds, as a bear robbed of her whelps in the field: and thy father is a man of war, and will not lodge with the people” (2 Sam. 17:8). In these words Hushai artfully suggests that Ahithophel was seriously misjudging the ease of his task. He had lightly and presumptuously declared “I will smite the king only” (v. 2). But *that* was not such a simple task as Ahithophel supposed. David was something more than a pasteboard monarch: he was a man of great courage and much experience in the arts of warfare. Moreover, he was accompanied by valiant warriors, who were in an angry mood over the shameful necessity of their beloved master’s flight from Jerusalem, and would not stand idly by while he was slaughtered. Absalom had better pause and face the very real difficulties of the situation, for it is often a fatal mistake to underestimate the strength of an adversary. To sit down and count the cost (Luke 14:28), is always a prudent course to follow. Rash and ill-considered measures are likely to meet with failure. But much grace is needed in this feverish age to act thoughtfully and cautiously, and not rush blindly ahead.

“Behold, he is hid now in some pit, or in some other place: and it will come to pass, when some of them be overthrown at the first, that whosoever heareth it will say, There is a slaughter among the people that follow Absalom” (2 Sam. 17:9, 10). The fugitive king was not the type of man to seek his ease: he “will not lodge with the people,” but rather will he, as a seasoned warrior, resort to subtle strategy, and lie in a well-chosen ambush, from which he will unexpectedly spring out, and slay at least the foremost of Ahithophel’s men. And *that* would seriously prejudice Absalom’s cause, for the news would quickly go forth that David was victor in the field. The practical lesson which this points for us, is, that we must not commit the folly of underestimating the strength and subtlety of our spiritual enemies, and that we must carefully consider what are the best ways and means of overcoming them. Our lusts often secretly hide themselves, and then spring forth when they are least expected. Satan generally attacks us from an unlooked-for quarter. He has had far more exposure than we, and we need to tread very cautiously if he is not to gain a serious advantage over us.

“And he also that is valiant, whose heart is as the heart of a lion, shall utterly melt: for all Israel knoweth that thy father is a mighty man, and they which be with him are valiant men” (v. 10). Hushai is here pressing upon Absalom what would inevitably follow if that should eventuate which he had mentioned in the previous verse. In case David succeeded in springing a trap and the advance guard of Ahithophel’s proposed expedition were slain, as would most probably happen when pitted against such a wily antagonist as the conqueror of Goliath, only one course would surely follow—the entire force sent against David would be demoralized. The inexperienced men Ahithophel led, though superior in numbers, would now feel they were no match for the braves in the king’s forces, and they would be utterly dismayed. That would be fatal to Absalom’s cause, as a very little reflection must make apparent. Human nature is very fickle, and men in the mass are even more easily swayed than are individuals: it takes very little to turn the tide of public opinion.

“Therefore I counsel that all Israel be generally gathered unto thee, from Dan even to Beersheba, as the sand that is by the sea for multitude; and that thou go to battle in thine own person” (2 Sam. 17:11). This was the only logical inference to draw from the preceding premises. The “twelve thousand men” Ahithophel asked for (17:1) were altogether inadequate for success against such a general as David and against such renowned men as

he commanded. Absalom must mobilize the entire manhood of the nation, and overwhelm his father by sheer force of numbers. Incidentally, observe that “as the sand is by the sea for multitude” is a *hyperbolic* expression to denote a considerable company, and is *not* to be taken at its face value. This same figure is used again in “I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore” (Gen. 22:17), “And they went out, they and all their hosts with them, much people, even as the sand that is upon the sea shore in multitude” (Josh. 11:4), “And the Midianites and the Amalekites and all the children of the east lay along in the valley like grasshoppers for multitude; and their camels were without number” (Judg. 7:12). Therefore, if Scripture is to be interpreted by Scripture the “great multitude which no man could number” of Revelation 7:9 must be taken as a hyperbole and *not* interpreted literally.

In counseling Absalom to undertake a general mobilization, or the gathering together of an overwhelming force, Hushai was obviously “playing for time.” The longer he could induce Absalom to delay taking military action against the one he was befriending, the better would his real object be achieved. The slower Absalom was in moving, the more time would David have for putting a greater distance between himself and Jerusalem, to increase his own forces, and to select to best advantage the site for the coming conflict. The entire design of Hushai was to counter Ahithophel’s proposed “I will arise and pursue after David *this* night” (2 Sam. 17:1). To further strengthen his argument Hushai suggest that Absalom should “go to battle in thine own person” (v. 11)—take the place of honour, and lead your own men. Indirectly, he was intimating that Ahithophel’s project had only his *own* ends (private revenge) and personal glory in view: note his “I will arise,” “I will come upon him,” “I will smite the king” (vv. 1, 2). Hushai knew well the kind of man he was dealing with, and so appealed to the pride of his heart.

As we shall (D.V.) see from the sequel, it was this very detail which issued in Absalom’s losing his own life. Had he followed the counsel of Ahithophel he would have remained in Jerusalem, but by accepting the advice of Hushai to go to battle in his own person, he went forth to his death. How true it is that “God taketh the wise in their own craftiness: and the counsel of the froward is carried headlong” (Job. 5:13)! No doubt Absalom was priding himself in his prudence by obtaining the advice of both these experienced counselors, yet that was the very thing that led to his destruction. The suggestion of Hushai appealed to his personal vanity, and by yielding thereto we are shown here that “Pride goeth before destruction.” If God has placed you, my reader, in humble circumstances and in a lowly position, envy not those who take the lead, and aspire not to a place of worldly dignity and carnal honours.

“So shall we come upon him in some place where he shall be found, and we will light upon him as the dew falleth on the ground: and of him and of all the men that are with him there shall not be left so much as one” (2 Sam. 17:12). This completes the thoughts begun at the start of the preceding verse: by means of an enormous force we shall be able to fall upon David and his followers and utterly annihilate them: neither strategy nor valour will be of any avail against such overwhelming numbers. Such counsel as this was not only calculated to appeal to Absalom himself, but also to the unthinking masses: there would be little danger to themselves; in fact, such a plan seemed to guarantee success without any risk at all: “There is safety in numbers” would be their comforting slogan. Note Hushai’s artful use of the plural number: “So shall *we* come upon him” and “*we* will light upon him in sharp contrast from the threefold “I” of Ahithophel.

“Moreover, if he be gotten into a city, then shall all Israel bring ropes to that city, and we will draw it into the river, until there be not one small stone found there” (v. 13). Thus Hushai sought to close the door against every possible objection. Should David and his men take refuge in some city, and fortify it, instead of hiding in a pit or wood (v. 9), *that* would prove no obstacle to such a host as we should take against him. We will not endanger our men by seeking to force a way in, but, by main force, drag the city and its people into the river—this, of course, was not to be taken seriously, but was intended to raise a laugh. It was simply designed to signify that by no conceivable means could David either defy or escape them.

“And Absalom and all the men of Israel said, The counsel of Hushai the Archite is better than the counsel of Ahithophel. For the LORD had appointed to defeat the good (politic) counsel of Ahithophel, to the intent that the LORD might bring evil upon Absalom” (v. 14). The second half of this verse explains the first. The prudent advice of Ahithophel was rejected, and the plausible but foolish measures of Hushai were accepted—foolish because they involved so much delay. The same thing has happened scores of times in the affairs of nations, and for a similar reason. Folly often prevails over wisdom in the counsels of princes and in the houses of legislators. Why? Because *God* has appointed the rejection of sound counsel in order to bring on nations the vengeance which their crimes call down from Heaven. It is *thus* that God rules the world by His Providence. See that grave senator, or that sage diplomat: he rises and proposes a course of wisdom; but if God has appointed to punish the nation, some prating fanatic will impose his sophisms on the most sagacious assembly. —A.W.P.

## The Divine Covenants.

### 6. *The Davidic.*

In this article we shall attempt little more than to point out *the connecting links* between the Siniatic and the Davidic covenants. The various covenants recorded in the Old Testament, as we have previously stated, mark the principal stages in the development of God's purpose of mercy towards our fallen race. Each one brought to light some further aspect of Truth, and that, in keeping with particular incidents in the circumstances of God's people on earth. The covenants and the history are so intimately related that some knowledge of the one is indispensable to an understanding of the other, for each throws light upon the other. Only when the Divine covenants and the sacred history connected with them are mutually studied, can we be in a position to trace the Divine wisdom in those epoch-making transactions. But in order not to extend the series unto too great a length, our review of the history must necessarily be brief and incomplete.

The statutes and ordinances given for the regulation of Israel, the covenant people, assumed a definite form sometime before the death of Moses, who, on account of his sin, was not allowed to lead the people into the promised land. In view of his removal, he was Divinely instructed to select Joshua as his successor, to whose leadership the nation was entrusted in the great enterprise which lay before them. The previous life of this eminent man had supplied a suitable training for the work which was assigned to him, and his future conduct manifested qualities which evidenced him to be equal to all the exigencies of his high service. Under this administration, the conquest of Canaan was, to a large extent, successfully accomplished, and the land was divided by lot to the several tribes. On the eve of his decease he was able to say, "Behold, this day I am going the way of all the earth: and ye know in all your hearts . . . that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the LORD your God spake concerning you; all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof" (Josh. 23:14).

The above language (like much in Scripture) is not to be taken absolutely, as though the entire conquest of Canaan was now complete and the inheritance fully secured—the fact was otherwise. No, it is to be understood as affirming that up to this time no assistance had been withheld which their project required or that had been promised to them, and it was designed to strengthen their faith and encourage their hearts in regard to further success in its future prosecutions. Joshua had no successor, nor was any needed. Though Israel was a single nation, with common laws, under one King, yet each tribe had its own rulers, sufficient for orderly self-government and to take possession of that portion of the inheritance which had been allotted them. In some cases the land had yet to be acquired, and the tribes whose property it was were obligated to effect its conquest, whether by their own efforts, or with the aid of their fellows. All of this is sufficiently apparent from the facts of the sacred history.

After the death of Joshua, Judah, assisted by the tribe of Simeon, was the first to go up, under Divine direction, to fight against the Canaanites. For a time success attended their efforts, but soon they fell into the awful sin of idolatry (Judg. 2:11-13), and Divine punishment quickly followed. Jehovah led them into the hands of their enemies, until in pity for their affliction, He interposed for their relief. The historical account of their condition during a lengthy period is but fragmentary. The book of Judges does not give us a continuous and connected narrative, but merely relates the principal disasters in which, at different times, their transgressions involved them, and of the various means which God

graciously employed for their deliverance. If the reader will consult Judges 2:12-18 he will discover that the remainder of that book is but a series of illustrations of what is there stated.

The "Judges" were extraordinary officers raised up by God, occasionally, by special designation, yet always acting with the free concurrence of the people. While their rule in most instances extended over the whole nation, in some it seems to have been confined to particular tribes only; but so far as their commission reached, they had under God supreme authority. Usually they were the leaders in the military operations undertaken against the oppressors of Israel; though in some instances they were appointed for the suppression of disorders prevailing among the tribes themselves. Special circumstances alone determined their appointment. Their power was real, yet so far as the inspired record informs us, their habits continued simple; they had no external badge of distinction, received no emolument for their services, and enjoyed no exclusive privileges that were capable of being transmitted to the members of their several families.

The book of Judges is mainly limited to giving us a summary statement of the official acts of these men. There are considerable intervals in respect to which we have no information—possibly because those particular periods were marked by comparative peace and prosperity, during which the worship of Jehovah was maintained and His blessing enjoyed—of that state of things the book of Ruth supplies a pleasing illustration. Throughout the whole of this period; the Levitical institutions supplied the people with all the instruction which was necessary for their direction in Divine worship and the maintenance of that fellowship with God to which they had been admitted. Nothing in the form of addition was made to the Truth which through the instrumentality of Moses had been disclosed and placed on permanent record. Some were raised up endowed with the gift of prophecy, but they appear to have been few in number, appearing only on rare occasions, their utterances being confined to what concerned the present duty of the people.

Though no new Truth was given, nor even any amplification of what had been previously revealed, yet even so, Israel then supplied a striking type of the Kingdom of God as it is now revealed under the Gospel. They were a people under the immediate government of God, subject to His authority alone, bound together by ties which their relation to Him created, and enjoying the privilege of access to His mercy-seat (through their high priest) for counsel and aid in every emergency. Is it not thus, though in a true and higher sense, with the saints of this dispensation? The Lord is enthroned in their hearts, His yoke they have freely taken upon them, and whatever distinctions in other respects may exist among them, they are one in fealty to Him and unite in the practical homage which He requires. But Israel understood not their position and appreciated not their advantages. They were discontented, distrustful, stiffnecked, ever forsaking their own mercies.

In one particular respect their outward condition remained defective: they had not yet acquired the full and peaceful possession of their inheritance. Their enemies were still powerful, and involved them in perpetual trouble. This, however, was the effect of *their own unfaithfulness*. Had they resolutely obeyed the voice of the Lord and continued in the task to which He had called them, had they in humble dependence on His power and promised grace fulfilled their instructions, they would soon have realized a state of prosperity equal to all they were warranted to expect (Psa. 81:13-16). But their indolence and unbelief deprived them of blessings which were within their reach. They were unsettled. Their very worship was in a degree as yet provisional—indicated by the removal of the



ark of the covenant from place to place. They were content that it should be so, being too carnal-minded to really value the peculiar constitution which it was their privilege to enjoy.

Samuel was the last of the "Judges" and from *his* time the stream of history flows on in a more continuous course. Received in answer to prayer, he was from his birth consecrated to God. The consecration was graciously accepted, and while yet a child, he became the subject of Divine communications. Thus early did the Lord indicate the nature of that service in which his life was to be spent. Samuel, we are told, "grew, and the LORD was with him, and did let none of his words fall to the ground. And all Israel from Dan even to Beersheba knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the LORD" (1 Sam. 3:19, 20). At what time he publicly assumed the office of judge we are not directly informed; probably while yet a youth he was understood to be designed thereto, but only in mature life acknowledged in that capacity by the tribes assembled at Mizpeh (1 Sam. 7:6).

Since Moses, no one exercised a more beneficial influence upon Israel, in every respect, than did Samuel. His administration was singularly able and prosperous. When the infirmities of age came upon him, he associated his sons with him in the office, doubtless with the concurrence of the people; but, as so often follows in such a case, the arrangement did not work well. The young men were very different in character from their aged parent, and they acted accordingly: "And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment" (1 Sam. 8:3). The evil course they pursued seems to have been systematic and open, and was publicly felt to be all the more intolerable because of its marked contrast from the integrity which had uniformly marked the official conduct of Samuel himself.

Such scandalous conduct on the part of Samuel's sons caused the people to be loud in their expression of dissatisfaction, which was followed by a demand for which the aged servant of God was not prepared: "Then all the elders of Israel gathered themselves together, and came to Samuel unto Ramah, and said unto him, Behold, thou art old, and thy sons walk not in thy ways: now make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (1 Sam. 8:4, 5). Various considerations incline us to form the conclusion that this proposal was far from being a sudden one on the part to people. Although Samuel was neither slow nor unsuccessful in repelling the attacks of their enemies, yet his government was, on the whole, a pacific one, such as the condition of the people then called for. While much yet remained to be done for the complete conquest of their inheritance, they were enfeebled by unbelief and all its consequences, and therefore practically unfitted for the work assigned to them.

Time and training were required for their restoration to that state of efficiency on which, humanly speaking, their success depended. This was the result at which the administration of Samuel aimed. But there is reason to believe that this wise policy was anything but agreeable to them. However ill qualified for it, the passion for conquest had sprung up among the people. They had become dissatisfied with the occasional military efforts of the "Judges" and enamoured with the regal pomp of the surrounding nations, they formed extravagant expectations of what a vast improvement in their condition the settled rule of a race of kings would produce. This, we take it, is what led up to and lies behind the demand which they made upon Samuel in the present instance.

But that demand involved *a marked departure* from the constitution which God had established amongst them. Jehovah Himself was their *King*, and He had given no outward intimation that things should not continue in the observance of those simple arrangements under which their political condition had been settled, with the assurance that the Lord was ever present with them, ready to afford them the counsel and aid which they needed. Their past history, notwithstanding their deep unworthiness, had abundantly proved how promptly and graciously that assurance had been made good. But this state of privilege the people were too earthly to value. In the intention of the mass of the people, the request made to Samuel was a practical renunciation of the theocracy. The demand itself, then, was wrong, and in spirit and purpose it was still more reprehensible.

The demand presented to Samuel indicated an unreasonable dissatisfaction with the Divine goodness, and a rejection of the Divine claims. In this light it was regarded by God Himself. The Lord said unto Samuel, "Hearken unto the voice of the people in all that they say unto thee: for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not reign over them" (1 Sam. 8:7). That the change now desired would be ultimately sought was foreseen from the first. An intimation to that effect was given through Moses and accompanied with instructions for the guidance of the people when that event occurred. "When thou art come unto the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, and shalt possess it, and shalt dwell therein, and shalt say, *I will set* a king over me, like as all the nations that are about me; thou shalt in any wise set him king over thee, whom the LORD thy God shall choose: one from among thy brethren shalt thou set king over thee: thou mayest not set a stranger over thee, which is not thy brother. But he shall not multiply horses to himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt, etc." (Deut. 17:14-20).

It is to be duly noted that the terms of the above passage simply anticipated what *would* assuredly happen: they neither ordered the change itself, nor expressed approval of it. The request made by Israel to Samuel was indeed granted, yet in such a way as to demonstrate the fallacy of the expectations, which they had entertained, and to bring with it chastisement for their sin. God gave them their own desire, but mocked their vain hopes. The regal dignity was first conferred on Saul, one possessing the very qualifications which Israel desired: a man *after their own heart*. He was comely in person, commanding in appearance, just such an one as to suit their carnal tastes. To his appointment some dissatisfaction was at first shown, but this was speedily silenced by the success of his early actions, and subsequently his election was confirmed at Gilgal with the general concurrence of Israel: (1 Sam. 11:15).

But the reign of Saul was a disastrous one. He was grievously defective in those moral and spiritual qualities indispensable to the requirements of his high position. The defects of his character soon became apparent: he proved himself to be rash, self-willed, jealous, and disobedient to the Divine command. His administration was marked by injustice and cruelty; disorder and feebleness increased towards the close of his reign, and, forsaken of God, he ultimately perished on the battlefield, where the armies of Israel suffered an ignominious defeat—sorely wounded, Saul put an end to his miserable existence by taking his own life. Fearfully humiliating, then, was Israel's punishment for their presumptuous sin. To this sad episode the words of the Prophet applied, when through him God said, "I gave thee a king in Mine anger, and took him away in My wrath" (Hosea 13:11).—A.W.P.

### Christ our Exemplar.

Two serious mistakes have been made by men in taking or not taking Christ for their example, and it is difficult to determine which is the more evil and fatal of the two. First, there have been those who held up the perfect life of the Lord Jesus before the unconverted and maintained that they must imitate the same in order to find acceptance with God. In other words, they made the emulating of Christ “the way of salvation” unto lost sinners. This is a fundamental error, which cannot be resisted too strenuously. It repudiates the total depravity and spiritual helplessness of fallen men. It denies the imperative necessity for the new birth. It nullifies the Atonement, by emphasizing Christ’s flawless life at the expense of His sacrificial death. It substitutes works for faith, creature efforts for Divine grace, man’s faulty doings for the Redeemer’s finished work. If the Acts and Epistles are searched it will be found that the Apostles never preached the imitating of Christ as the way to obtain forgiveness of sins and secure peace with God.

But in recent generations the pendulum has swung to the opposite extreme. If a century ago the example which Christ has left His people was made too much of, our moderns make far too little of it. If *they* gave it a place when preaching to the unsaved, which Scripture does not warrant, *we* have sadly failed to press it upon Christians to the extent that Scripture requires. If they are to be blamed for misusing the example of Christ in connection with justification, we are guilty of failing to use it in connection with sanctification. While it is true that the moral perfections which Christ so illustriously displayed during His earthly sojourn are still extolled in many places, yet how rarely one now hears (or reads) of those who insist that the emulating of Christ is absolutely essential for the believer’s preservation and ultimate salvation: yea, would not the great majority of “orthodox” preachers be positively afraid to make any such assertion lest they be charged with “legality”?

The Lord Jesus Christ is not only a perfect and glorious Pattern of all graces, holiness, virtue and obedience, to be preferred above all others—but *He alone* is such. In the lives of the best of the saints, Scripture records that which it is our bounden duty to avoid, as well as that which we ought to follow, so that sometimes one is puzzled to know whether it is safe to conform unto them or not. But God has graciously supplied us with a sure rule which effectually solves that problem and if heeded by us we shall never be at a loss to perceive our duty. The holy men and women of Scripture are to be imitated by us only as far as they were themselves conformed unto *Christ*: see 1 Corinthians 11:1. The best of their graces, the highest of their attainments, the most perfect of their duties were spoiled by spots and blemishes—but in Christ is no imperfection whatever, for He had no sin and did no sin.

Christ is not only the perfect but also the *pattern* Man and therefore is His example suitable for *all* believers. This remarkable fact presents a feature which has not received the attention it deserves. There is nothing so distinctive in personality as racial and national characteristics. The greatest of men bear unmistakable marks of their heredity and environment. Racial peculiarities are imperishable: to the last fiber of his being Luther was German, Knox a Scot; with all his largeness of heart Paul was a Jew. Now in sharp and blessed contrast, Jesus Christ rose above heredity and environment—nothing local, transient, national, or sectarian dwarfed His wondrous personality. Christ is the only truly catholic man. He belongs to *all* ages and is related to *all* men, because He is “the Son of

man.” This it is which underlies the *universal suitability* of Christ’s example to believers of all nations, who one and all may find in Him the perfect realization of their ideal.

This is indeed a miracle and exhibits a transcendent perfection in the Man Christ Jesus which is rarely pondered. How remarkable it is that the converted Englishman may find in Christ’s character and conduct a pattern as well suited to him as to a saved Chinaman! His example is as appropriate for the regenerated Zulu as it is for a born-again German. The needs of Lord Bacon and Sir Isaac Newton were as truly met in Christ as were those of the half-witted youth who said, “I am a poor sinner and nothing at all. But Jesus Christ is my all in all.” How remarkable that the example of Christ is as appropriate for believers of the twentieth century as it was for those of the first, that it is as suitable for a Christian child as for his grandparent! There is nothing effeminate about Christ, yet Christian women can take Him for their example as well as may Christian men. Christ rises above *all* human limitations: He is perfect Man, and therefore is His example perfectly suited to all believers.

He is *appointed* of God for this very purpose. One end why God sent His Son to become flesh and tabernacle in the world therein was that He might set before us an example in our own nature. In Christ is One who was like unto us in all things, sin alone excepted, thereby exhibiting to us of that renewal to His image in us, of that return unto Him from sin and apostasy and of that holy obedience which He requires of us. Such an example was needful that we might never be at a lost about the will of God in His commandments, having a glorious representation of it before our eyes and that could be given us no otherwise than *in our own nature*. The angelic nature was not suited to set us an example of obedience, especially as to the exercise of such graces as we specially stand in need of in this world. What example could angels set us in themselves of patience in afflictions or quietness in sufferings when *their* nature is *incapable* of such things? Nor could we have had a complete and perfect example in our nature except in One who was holy and “separate from sinners.”

Many are the Scriptures which present Christ as the believer’s Exemplar, the principal of which are the following, “Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me: for I am meek and lowly in heart” (Matt. 11:29)—Learn by the course of My life as well as by the word of My mouth. “When He putteth forth His own sheep, He goeth before them, and the sheep follow Him” (John 10:4)—He requires no more of us than He rendered Himself. “I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you” (John 13:15). “Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be like-minded one toward another *according to Christ Jesus*” (Rom. 15:5). “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus” (Phil. 2:5). “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, *looking unto Jesus* the Author and Finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:1, 2). “But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow His steps” (1 Peter 2:20, 21). “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk, even as He walked” (1 John 2:6).

Example is better than precept. Why? Because a precept is more or less an abstraction, whereas an example sets before us *a concrete presentation* and therefore has more aptitude to incite the mind unto imitation. The conduct of those with whom we are in close association exerts a considerable influence upon us, either for good or evil. That fact is clearly recognized in the Scriptures. For example, we are enjoined, “Make no friendship

with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go: lest thou learn his ways, and get a snare to thy soul” (Prov. 22:24, 25). It was for this reason (among others) that God commanded the Israelites to utterly destroy all the inhabitants of Canaan, so that they might not learn their evil ways and be contaminated by them (Deut. 7:2-4). Contrariwise, the example of the pious exerts an influence for good: that is why they are called “the salt of the earth.”

Now it is in keeping with this principle that God has appointed the consideration of Christ’s character and conduct as *a special means* for the increase of piety in His people, so that as their hearts contemplate His holy obedience, it has a peculiar efficacy unto their growing in grace beyond all other examples. It is in the beholding of the Lord Jesus by faith that salvation comes to us: “*Look* unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth” (Isa. 45:22). Christ is presented before the sinner in the Gospel, with the promise that whosoever believably looks unto Him shall not perish, but have everlasting life (John 3:14, 15). This is a special ordinance of God and it is made effectual by the Spirit unto all who believe. In like manner, Christ is presented unto the saints as the grand Pattern of obedience and Example of holiness, with the promise that as they contemplate Him as such we shall be changed into His image: 2 Corinthians 3:18. Our response to that appointment of God is rewarded by a growing in piety.

But to get down to details: *what is involved* and comprised in the saints’ imitating of Christ? First, it necessarily presupposes that they be *already regenerate*. The hearts of His followers must be sanctified before their lives can be conformed to Him. The spirit and principle of obedience must be imparted to the soul before there can be an external imitation of Christ’s practice. This order is plainly enunciated in, “I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them an heart of flesh: that they may walk in My statutes, and keep Mine ordinances, and do them: and they shall be My people, and I will be their God” (Ezek. 11:19, 20). One who is yet in the gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity has not heart for spiritual things: therefore the tree must be made good ere it can produce good fruit. We must first *live* in the Spirit and then *walk* in the Spirit (Gal. 5:25). One might as well urge the Ethiopian to change his skin or the leopard his spots as call upon the unconverted to follow the example which Christ has left His people.

Second, the imitating of Christ definitely denotes that *no Christian may govern himself* or act according to his own will and pleasure. Those who are a rule unto themselves act in fearful defiance of the Most High: “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jer. 10:23). A man may as well feign to be his own creator as his own guide. No man has wisdom enough to direct himself. When born again we are made conscious of this fact: our proud hearts are then humbled and our rebellious wills broken and we feel the need of being led by Another. The cry of a converted heart is, “Lord, what wouldest Thou have be to do?” and His answer to us today is, Follow the example which I have left you: learn of Me; walk even as I walked.

Third, if this imitating of Christ clearly implies that no man may pretend to be his own master, it is equally evident that no matter how wise or how holy he is, *no Christian has the right* nor is qualified to *rule others*—Christ alone is appointed and fitted to be the Lord of His people. It is true that we read in the Word, “That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises” (Heb. 6:12), and

“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account” (Heb. 13:17), yet that must be taken in subordination to the *example of Christ*. The best of men are but men at the best: they have their errors and their faults and wherein they differ from Christ it is our duty to differ from them. It is very important that we should be quite clear upon this point, for much mischief has resulted from allowing some to deprive others of a vital part of their rightful liberty.

It is not that Scripture teaches an ecclesiastical democracy—that is as far from the Truth as the Romish hierarchy at the opposite extreme. God has placed rulers in the Church and its members are commanded to obey the same; but their rule is administrative and not legislative—to enforce the laws of Christ and not invent rules of their own. Paul affirmed “Not for that we have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand” (2 Cor. 1:24), and Peter declared of the elders or bishops, “Neither as being lords over God’s heritage, but being ensamples to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). Filled with so great a measure of the Spirit of wisdom and holiness as the Apostle Paul was, yet he goes no higher than this: “Be ye followers of me, even as I *also am of Christ*” (1 Cor. 11:1).

Fourth, the imitation of Christ plainly intimates that *true Christianity is very strict and exacting* and in nowise countenances licentiousness or the indulgence of fleshly lusts. This needs emphasising in such a day as ours, when so much looseness and laxity prevail on every hand. People suppose they may be followers of Christ and yet ignore the path which He traversed—that they may decline the unpleasant task of denying self and yet make sure of Heaven. What a delusion! The vital necessity of the careful imitation of Christ utterly disallows all loose walking and rejects the claim of any to being real Christians if they heed not His holy example. Neither worldliness nor self-indulgence can find any protection beneath the wings of the Gospel. The unvarying rule which is binding upon all who claim to be His is, “Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity” (2 Tim. 2:19)—let him either follow the example of Christ, or cease claiming to belong to Him; let him tread the highway of holiness or all his fair words are worthless.

Fifth, the imitation of Christ necessarily implies *the blemishes of the best of men*. If the life of Christ is our pattern, then the holiest among His followers are obliged to own that they come far short of this standard of duty and that, not in a few details, but *in every respect*. The character and conduct of the Lord Jesus were without spot or blemish and therefore are so high above *our* poor attainments, that we are filled with shame when we measure ourselves thereby. Self-satisfied religionists may take delight in comparing themselves with others, as the Pharisee did with the Publican. And deluded souls who suppose that all Christian holiness consists of measuring up to some humanly-invented standard of perfection (or entering into some peculiar experience), may pride themselves that they have “received the second blessing” or “have the fullness or baptism of the Spirit”—yet all who honestly measure themselves by the perfections of *Christ* will find abundant cause to be humbled.

This, too, is a point of tremendous practical importance. If I place my handkerchief against a dark background it will appear spotlessly clean but if I lay it upon some newly-fallen snow the imperfection of its whiteness is quickly apparent. So if I compare my own experiences and life with that of certain “holiness” preachers or “victorious-life” advocates, I may rightly conclude that I compare favourably with them; but if I sincerely and

diligently apply to myself the line and plummet of *Christ's* example, then I must at once acknowledge that, like Peter of old, I am but following Him "afar off." Surely none was more proficient in holiness and punctilious in obedience than the Apostle Paul, yet, when he compared himself with Christ, he declared, "*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I *may* apprehend" (Phil. 3:12).

Sixth, the imitation of Christ as our rule and pattern clearly implies *His transcendent holiness*—that His holiness is high above that of all creatures. Therefore it is the greatest of the Christian's ambitions to be made conformed unto His image (Phil. 3:10). Now Christ has a double perfection: a perfection of *being* and a perfection of *working*. His life here upon earth supplies a perfect rule for us because there was no blot or error therein, for He was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners" and such an High Priest became us (Heb. 7:26). Thus the conformity of professing Christians unto Christ's example is both the test and measure of all their graces: the nearer anyone approaches to this Pattern, the closer he comes unto perfection.

Finally, the Christian's imitation of Christ, under the penalty of forfeiting his claim to any saving interest in Christ, necessarily denotes that sanctification and obedience are *the evidences of our justification* and acceptance with God. Scriptural assurance is unattainable without sincere and strict obedience. "The work of righteousness (not of loose living) shall be peace" (Isa. 32:17): "we have it not *for* our holiness, but we always have it *in the way* of holiness. Let men talk what they will of the immediate sealings and comforts of the Spirit *without* any regard to holiness, or respect to obedience: sure I am, whatever delusion they meet with in *that* way, true peace and consolation is only to be found and expected here" (John Flavell, to whom we are indebted for quite a little in the above seven points).—A.W.P.

## The Doctrine of Sanctification.

### 13. *Its Progress.*

As there are some who deny that there is any such thing as “progressive sanctification,” so there are others who go to an opposite extreme and contend for the attainment of “entire sanctification” in this life, teaching “sinless perfection” in the flesh; yea, there have been and still are numbers of professing Christians who claim they have lived for so many years without the commission of any known sin. These articles would lack completeness were we to ignore this phase of the matter, and as the present stage seems to be the best one for considering this somewhat vexed question, we have decided to canvass it, ere proceeding further with our present aspect. Is it possible for a Christian to reach the point where he can live in this world without sinning?

Those who answer the above question affirmatively differ considerably among themselves as to what sin is, as to the standard and rule of holiness (i.e., what law we are now obliged to fulfill), and as to the means whereby this perfection may be attained. We will not take the space to describe all the various brands of this error, but rather concentrate upon that which is most likely to affect some of our readers. As can readily be supposed, all “perfectionists” have low and defective views of both sin and holiness. This at once appears in their designating transgressions of God’s Law “mistakes of ignorance,” “infirmities,” while Romanists distinguish between “mortal and venial sins.” John Wesley taught that entire sanctification in this life consists in “a state in which perfect faith in Christ and perfect love for God fills the whole soul and governs the entire life,” so that “all inward disposition to sin as well as all outward commission of it, is excluded.”

That no man, whatever his advantages and attainments may be, does arrive at sinless perfection in this life is clearly asserted in Scripture. “Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?” (Prov. 20:9). “For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not” (Eccl. 7:20). “For the flesh lusteth against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (Gal. 5:17). “Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after . . . Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” (Phil. 3:12, 13). “For in many things we offend all” (James 3:2). “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us” (1 John 1:8). These Divine testimonies are decisive and prove that we are utterly deceived if we suppose we are living without sin.

When, then, we read “Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not . . . Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for His seed remaineth in him: and he . . . cannot sin, because he is born of God” (1 John 3:6, 9), it is certain the Apostle did *not* affirm that every true Christian, or any one of them, is free from sin in this life, for he would not expressly contradict what he had said in this same Epistle (1:8). No, his evident meaning is that none who is truly born of God and united by faith to Christ sins as do the unregenerate, or as he himself did before he passed from death unto life. He no longer lives in sin: he makes it not his trade and practice; rather does he now live a life devoted to Christ, though attended with much imperfection and defiled by much sin.

In like manner, those passages which speak of saints as “perfect” must be interpreted in harmony with the general tenor of Scripture. Such a verse as “Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a *perfect* heart, and have done that which is good in Thy sight” (Isa. 38:3) signifies *sincerity* as opposed



to hypocrisy. Accordingly such “perfection” as is mentioned in Scripture is explained as denoting *uprightness*: “There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil” (Job 1:1)—elsewhere Job disclaims any pretensions to sinless perfection: “If I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse” (9:20). In a number of places in the New Testament “perfection” signifies maturity, in contrast from those who are babes and the inexperienced. He who carefully and impartially studies his Bible will discover that saints are not said to be “perfect” in any higher sense than these. Paul said emphatically, “*Not* as though I had already attained, either were already perfect,” yet immediately after he spoke of himself and others as being “perfect” (Phil. 3:12, 15): he must use that term, then, in two different senses, otherwise he would contradict himself.

“First, the Scriptures never assert that a Christian may in this life attain to a state in which he may live without sin. Second, the meaning of special passages must be interpreted in consistency with the entire testimony of Scripture. Third, the language of Scripture never implies that man may here live without sin. The commands of God are adjusted to man’s responsibility, and the aspirations and prayers of the saints to their duties and ultimate privileges, and not to their personal ability. Perfection is the true aim of the Christian’s effort in every period of growth and in every act. The terms ‘perfect’ and ‘blameless’ are often *relative*, or used to signify simple genuineness. This is evident from the recorded fact.—Fourth, that all the perfect men of the Scriptures sometimes sinned: witness the histories of Noah, Job, David, Paul” (A. A. Hodge).

“Independent of what passeth in the day in those chambers of imagery within me, were I to be judged for what takes place in the watches of the night in my sleeping hours, even in those things which some may deem involuntary and perhaps venial, yet even here I find it good to *confess guilt* before God. I know not what the advocates of sinless perfection may think of this statement. It is possible they may assert that no responsibility is attached to any supposed or real criminality in sleep. And, indeed, I am not anxious to go into the inquiry, whether it be so or not. It is simply of the facts themselves for which I contend. Sure I am, that in a multitude of instances, while my body takes rest in sleep, there is another part of me, a thinking faculty, which doth not sleep, and which is not infrequently most busily engaged in thoughts and words and actions. And, indeed, at times so engaged *in evil*, as I should blush to communicate to the nearest and dearest earthly friend I have. It becomes an important question with such as those who insist upon sinless perfection to answer, *from whence* do such things arise? I stay not to determine the point as to my responsibility from them. Let that part of the subject be set aside. But it should seem to be a self-evident truth, that if evil were not within, such circumstances of evil could not be produced. They are the words of my Lord which saith ‘*Out of the heart proceed* evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemies’ (Matt. 15:19).

“Precious Lord Jesus! How can I with such views of indwelling corruption, take confidence from any inherent holiness? Should I not tremble at the very thought of Thine inspection, if my acceptance before Thee is dependent upon the least atom of worth in me? If Thy Word be ‘quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow’; if this be a ‘discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart,’ how ‘naked and open must be everything’ to Thy knowledge ‘with whom we have to do’ (Heb. 4:12, 13). And should

my Lord, as an almighty spiritual anatomist, cut down to the backbone of my frame, and throw open at one view the whole inward structure, shouldest Thou, great God! make bare the privy chamber of my heart, the depth of which, and the workings of which, I myself cannot explore, but where all my 'secret sins are in the light of Thy countenance'—Lord! how should I stand before Thee in the discoveries Thou wouldest make, 'whose eyes are as a flame of fire'? And can I, can any man, in the consciousness of such things, be led to advocate the cause of sinless perfection? The question rings through all the chambers of the conscience, and the walls of the heart reverberate the solemn sound, and echoes to the inquiry 'How shall man be just before God? How can he be clean that is born of a woman?' (Job. 25:4).

"When I look back to the days of old, when I consider the years of many generations, when I read the groans and self-reproaches of the greatest servants of the Most High, not in the days of their un-regeneracy, but many of them years after a saving work of grace had been wrought in their heart, I ask myself the question, did these men indeed *feel* what they have said; and, under such impressions, could any one have made them believe the doctrine of sinless perfection? Nay, hath God the Holy Spirit, in the history of those faithful followers of the Lord given a single instance in all the Bible of such an one? Gracious Lord Jesus! I desire to lay low in the dust before Thy Divine majesty, under a conscious sense that 'in me, that is in my flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.' Yea. Blessed Lord, let me go softly all my days under a deep sense of it, learning more and more my own nothingness, that I may therefrom, under God, know how to value more and more Christ's fullness, suitableness, and all-sufficiency. And if the daily workings of my heart do but endear my Lord the more to me, I am content to be indeed nothing, yea, worse than nothing, so that Christ may be glorified" (Robert Hawker, 1820—a few words altered by us).

Let it be clearly understood that we are *not* advocates of sinless perfection. While it be true, blessedly true, that the Law has been satisfied by the Lord Jesus for the justification of all His people, yet its righteous requirements upon us have not been abated one iota, for every Christian is under binding obligations to love the Lord with all his heart and his neighbour as himself. He is called upon to be holy in all manner of conversation, to lay aside every weight and the sin which doth so easily beset him and to run the race set before him. He is commanded to mortify his members which are upon the earth, to make no provision for the flesh, to abstain from all appearance of evil, to seek the glory of God in everything which he does. Sin is never to be courted or allowed, but resisted and forsaken. The Christian is obligated to follow the example Christ has left him and walk in His steps. He is to constantly aim at sinless perfection, and forgetting all past failure strive for a complete conformity to Christ.

Everything in us and from us which is contrary to God's holiness is criminal. Every falling short of the perfect standard He has set before us is sinful, and is to be confessed by us. But it does not follow from this that any Christian has, does, or will in this life fully conform to the Divine rule of duty. For that, the believer is wholly dependent upon God's sovereign grace. He is no more holy than he is made so by omnipotent operations of the Holy Spirit; and though God requires him to be perfectly holy, yet He is under no obligation, by promise or any other way, to make the Christian perfectly holy in this world. His requiring of holiness does not imply any such obligation on His part, nor has He given any promise to that effect in the new covenant. But He has promised to *pre-*

*serve* His people in holiness so that they shall not apostatise, and He has promised to make them perfectly holy at their *glorification*, so that they shall never sin again for all eternity.

As to the particular degree of holiness and the particular exercises of it in each Christian, God orders it as He pleases, to answer His own all-sufficient purpose. To one there is given five talents, to another only two. The Redeemer is able to make every believer perfectly holy at his first conversion, so that he should never be guilty of another sin. And had that been the wisest and best, it had been so ordered. Remember that God's thoughts and ways are high above ours (Isa. 55:8), and the wisdom of this world is foolishness with Him. We may be certain, however, that it is most wise and best that none of the redeemed *should* be perfectly holy in this life, even though we were quite unable to now see any of the reasons *why* the redeemed are still in such an imperfect state and in so great a degree sinful, or the wise (if to us, mysterious) ends which are answered thereby. A few of these shall now be mentioned.

First, if believers were now perfectly holy, they would not be so fit to live in this disordered, sinful world. There would not be that analogy of one thing to another which is observable in all the works of God, and which is proper and wise—i.e., every creature being fitted to its particular environment: fish to water, birds to air, etc. This is not a world suited to be the dwelling-place of immaculate beings. But it *does* furnish a suitable scene and state of discipline to form and train the redeemed for a state of perfect holiness and happiness in another world.

Second, if Christians were perfectly holy in this life, it would not be a state of trial, as it now is. Their temptations would be neither so many nor strong. Satan could not have so much power and advantage to harass them, seeking to seduce them; and their danger would not be so great and apparent. Consequently, they would not have the opportunity for the exercise of such graces as humiliation and repentance for their repeated sins, loathing themselves for the same, mortifying their lusts, longing for deliverance, and exercising faith and patience through such dark and disagreeable circumstances as now they have, and by which Christ is honoured and themselves prepared for rewards in His kingdom.

Third, such a state of imperfection is both suited and necessary to teach them more effectually and make them feel by abundant experience the total depravity of fallen human nature, the evil character and odiousness of sin, the inconceivable and inexpressible deceitfulness and obstinacy of their own hearts, and their absolute dependence upon the sovereign grace of God to prevent their destruction and save them. Thereby are they enabled to perceive more clearly and appreciate more deeply *the atonement* which Christ has made for them, and the exceeding greatness of His power which preserves such wretches. Thereby they learn such lessons to better advantage in this state of imperfection and sin than they could in a state of perfect holiness.

Fourth, the power of God is much more conspicuous and sensible in maintaining a small degree of holiness in the heart of a Christian in the midst of the opposition with which it and he is surrounded and assailed, than in making him perfectly holy at once. In this way the weak Christian, in the midst of strong temptations and powerful enemies, constantly exercising all their cunning to devour him, is upheld by the omnipotent hand of the Redeemer, and the little spark of holiness implanted in his heart is kept alive and burning, notwithstanding there is so much within and without tending to extinguish it.

This is as great and wondrous a miracle as the preservation of a spark of fire year after year in the midst of the sea. The Christian is by his very situation and experience made in some measure conscious of this, and exclaims, "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Cor. 12:9).

Fifth, the wondrous condescension, goodness, tender love, infinite longsufferance of the Saviour are also exercised and manifested by His constant care of believers, though they be so imperfect and sinful, and offend in many things, and are often guilty of that which in itself is sufficient to provoke Him to give them up. There is much more opportunity for Him to act out and display His grace and forbearance, than if they were perfectly holy from the time of their conversion. This was illustrated by His attitude toward the first of His New Testament disciples. What selfishness, ingratitude, stupidity, and unbelief they manifested, yet how tenderly and patiently did He deal with them. Thus He treats *all* His disciples while in this life. They are, in measure, conscious of this, and love Him all the more for it; though they grieve bitterly over their sin and failures.

Thus the wisdom and goodness of God appear in so ordering it that no man, even the most eminent saint, shall be perfectly holy in this life, but that all the redeemed shall in this world be very imperfect and sinful, for the reasons mentioned above and the ends which are answered thereby. More might be added, yet the half cannot be discovered by us now. A clear and full view of the infinite wisdom and goodness of God in this, is reserved for the future state, when the saved shall review all the dispensations of Heaven and ways of Him who is "wonderful in counsel and excellent in working." Should the carping objector exclaim, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" The answer is, "God forbid." Nor will those considerations exert any evil influence upon those whose hearts are right toward God; rather will they be the more thankful for the few rays of light which they cast upon a dark problem.

But to turn to the more immediate aspect of our theme. Though the believer be not perfectly sanctified in this life, he *does* make progress in holiness. This is clear from our Lord's words "every branch that beareth fruit, He purgeth it, that it may bring forth *more* fruit" (John 15:2). Every living branch in the Vine grows in grace and fruitfulness; or, to express it in another way, he advances both in the work of mortification and of vivification. Most frequently such growth is likened unto that of trees (Psa. 92:12; Hosea 14:5, etc.), and it must be borne in mind that they grow both downwards and upwards: by the deepening of their roots and the spreading of their branches—the one unseen, the other apparent to the eye. But it is this very fact which most deeply exercises an honest heart, for so far from progress in holiness, he can perceive only retrogression: and instead of increasing fruitfulness, the decay of many of his graces.

The Christian's growth in grace is a mystery to be apprehended by *faith* rather than by sight. Our spiritual life is maintained by faith, much more than the discerning of the increase of it. Yea, the spiritual life (strange and paradoxical as it sounds to carnal reason) is advanced *by contraries*: by falls and dissertations, and therefore is discerned by faith rather than by sense, for "faith is the evidence of things not seen." Moreover, the Christian's desires for grace grow larger, and his sense of want more acute (and this is a growth in itself), which hinders a perception of his progress: "There is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches" (Prov. 13:7). Again; there are great differences among Christians in the matter of growth. Some are planted in a congenial soil (under an edifying ministry), but with others it is quite different. Some are more shielded from tempta-

tions. Some grow without intermission (Col. 1:6), others leave their first love. Some die early, and therefore God fits them for Heaven the sooner. Some are most fruitful in their early days (like Isaac), others (like Solomon) bring forth most fruit in old age.—A.W.P.

### The Providence of God.

*The History of Joseph: Genesis 37, etc.*

The history of Joseph is a series of miracles of Providence. In it the hand of God, in the ruling of the world, is admirably revealed. God does His will through the voluntary actions of men, and effects His purpose as well by His enemies as by His friends; and through the disobedience and ignorance of His people, as well as through their obedience and knowledge. To account for this is beyond the reach of human intellect. Proud man tries to fathom the abyss, and when he fails, he relieves himself by denying its existence. He will not receive *both* parts of the Truth, but, according to his humor, will modify one of them so as to suit the other, that he may glory that he can discover the deep things of the unsearchable God. What he cannot comprehend, with him cannot be true. Will vain man never cease to strive with the Almighty? Will he never learn that the ways of the Lord are inscrutable? "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!" (Rom. 11:33).

Joseph was selected by God as one of the persons who were to be *types of Christ*; and the peculiarity of his typical resemblance required every fact in his history. Jesus was envied and hated by His brethren the Jews: Joseph, as His type in this respect, must be hated by his father's sons. To effect this Joseph must be the darling of his father. Was it wise, was it just, in Jacob to show so marked a preference to his son Joseph? The best child should certainly be the most esteemed; but the preference of Joseph was because he was the son of the old age of his father. Some have struggled to relieve the patriarch from this reprehension, but in vain. And there is no need to strain the Word of God, to excuse or justify Jacob in the preference. It was still more foolish to distinguish the favourite by the singularity of his dress. This could have no other tendency than to provoke the jealousy of his brethren. Yet this imprudent expression of the particularity of his father might be Divinely directed as a shadow of what happened to Him who was typified by Joseph, when His robe was stripped off, and when He Himself was truly rent in pieces by the wild beasts of the forest on Mount Calvary. What Jacob believed about his darling son, was true with respect to the well beloved Son of God: "without doubt he was torn to pieces."

Joseph's dreams finished what Jacob's imprudence had first excited. But why did he *tell* his dreams? Had he not, though younger, as much wisdom to interpret his own dreams as had his brethren? If he did understand them, why did not his prudence conceal them? If their meaning was concealed from him, *why* was it concealed? Still more strange! When he told his first dream, did he not see that his brethren understood its import? Why, then, did he childishly tell the second? Here this son of prudence, wise in youth, providentially acts in the most unguarded manner, evidently that a way might be opened for his future history.

When the moment approached which God had appointed to send Joseph to Egypt, His Providence opened the way, and put the means in motion. The sons of Jacob were feeding their flock at a distance, and it occurs to Jacob to send Joseph to visit them. Why had the sons of Jacob removed to such a distance from Hebron? why at this particular time? Because this opened a way to fulfill the Lord's purpose. Now all things concurred to bring about the predestined event. All the lines meet in this center. As soon as his brethren discovered him at the greatest distance, it instantly occurred to them to rid themselves

of the object of their envy: "And when they saw him afar off, even before he came near unto them, they conspired against him to slay him" (Gen. 37:18). Yes, to *slay* him, and He who was typified by Joseph was actually slain; but it was not God's design to give effect to this conspiracy of murder, and, therefore, His Providence disappointed this part of the scheme. The heart of Rueben relented so far as to wish to prevent the death of the young man. How often are the intended deeds of blood prevented by a similar Providence! Some of the conspirators incline to mercy, and God uses their sympathy to prevent the execution. Jesus was to be buried in the heart of the earth: Joseph, His type, was cast into a pit; and the voice of prophecy speaks of the sufferings of Jesus as a sinking into a miry pit. But Jesus was to rise from the dead soon after His burial, and Joseph was drawn alive out of the pit in which he was placed by the cruelty of his brethren.

Jesus was to be sold: Joseph must be sold to represent Him in this part of His sufferings. Jesus was to be sold by Judas, one of His brethren, one of His disciples; Joseph must then be sold by Judas, one of his brethren. Jesus was to be carried into Egypt, the typical house of bondage, because He took on Him the sins of the Israel of God; Joseph, therefore, must be carried as a slave into Egypt. But how is he to go to Egypt? Divine Providence has a conveyance in readiness, and a messenger waiting to receive the exile. Just as his brethren had let down Joseph into the pit, and had sat down to eat and drink, they "lifted up their eyes and looked, and, behold, a company of Ishmeelites came from Gilead with their camels bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt" (Gen. 37:25). What brought them at this critical moment? and why were they Ishmeelites? As Ishmael himself mocked Isaac—and this by the Apostle Paul is interpreted as typifying the children of the flesh of Abraham persecuting his children of promise—so, here, the Ishmeelites for a like reason are the persons who sold Joseph to the Egyptians. The Jews, the carnal seed of Abraham, delivered Jesus to the Gentiles to be crucified. "And Joseph was brought down to Egypt; and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him of the hands of the Ishmeelites, which had brought him down thither" (Gen. 39:1).

In the person who bought Joseph we see the direction of Providence. Joseph might have come into Egypt, and remained in it through life, without an opportunity of rising, to his destined dignity. How many thousands might have been his purchasers! How did it happen that an officer of the king of Egypt, even the officer of the guard, was the purchaser of Joseph? Yet Joseph came immediately into the house of Potiphar.

In the house of Potiphar the Providence of the Lord protected Joseph, and obtained for him the unbounded confidence of his master. But this prosperity must be interrupted. Joseph must go to prison, and from prison to court. To bring this to pass, Divine Providence employed the wickedness of his mistress. In prison he found favour; and that prison, providentially, was the one in which the king's prisoners were bound. The circumstance was the occasion of his deliverance and exaltation. After Joseph was imprisoned, it happened that two of Pharaoh's servants that served about his person, were cast into the same prison. What a chance! The whole matter was of the Lord. This made Joseph known, at the proper time, to the king of Egypt. Jesus died between two malefactors, one of whom He saved, the other He suffered to perish in his sins. Joseph was imprisoned with two criminals, one of whom, by his interpretation of dreams, he saved, the other being hanged. Mark the providential circumstance in the forgetfulness of the chief butler. Joseph requested him to remember him before his master. But for two full years the chief

butler forgot Joseph. Why was this? Had he made immediate application, and delivered him, Joseph would not now be at hand to interpret Pharaoh's dream, and accomplish all that the Lord had appointed for him. Joseph, without doubt, would have returned to his country. The chief butler, by the overruling Providence of God, forgot Joseph; but now the case was providentially brought to his mind, at the time when it served the purpose of God.

Jesus, after the suffering of death, was exalted, as Ruler over all worlds; Joseph, as a figure of this, was exalted over all Egypt. Joseph provided breath for Israel in their extremity; Jesus was the Bread of Life to the true Israel of God. The children of Israel must be slaves in Egypt, to represent the natural slavery in which all the children of God are from the Fall of Adam; and this is the means that God appointed to bring them there. The famine obliged them to seek food in Egypt; and this was the means of bringing them into the land of bondage. God, by His Providence, guides the affairs of this world, and in all things effects His eternal purpose. And all things work together for good to them who love God and are called according to His purpose—their very afflictions are sent in love and in mercy.

From the history of Joseph we may see that the same thing may be from man, in one point of view, and from God, in another; and that what man may do sinfully to the injury of the people of God, God may effect through them for the good of His people. It is man's work, yet it is, in another view, God's work. How it is God's work the ingenuity of man cannot point out, the intellect of man cannot discover. But that the same thing is of man and of God, the Divine testimony forbids us to doubt. "But as for you," says Joseph to his brethren, "ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive" (Gen. 50:20).—Alexander Carson



**“Love to All the Saints.”**

“How should I regard Christians who ‘follow not with us?’ “ a young believer may ask. Well, how would that Great-Heart, the Apostle Paul, have regarded them? Are they not children of God? Hearts may agree, although heads differ, and God sees grace when we see none. If you think that these people have less light than you, their need is a claim upon your help; and, believe it or no, they can teach *you* something! Be on your guard against viewing them with suspicion or contempt. You are made of exactly the same flesh and blood as they are, and the same grace is at work in them as in you. God loves persons rather than places.

You may not find every believer very approachable; but try to cultivate spiritual fellowship with *all* God’s people by dwelling upon the big things that all true Christians hold in common. In this way you will help to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.” Be a living link of fellowship between believers. Sympathy is better than criticism. Disbelieve those who have no faith in their fellow-Christians. Do not take the world’s side against God’s people.

Each group or school of thought has its own emphasis, and sometimes its own phraseology. Don’t attach too much importance to pious phrase; the same truth can be expressed in different ways. We should learn to welcome *all* the Truth, through whatever channel it may come to us. And the gifts of Christ are for *all* His people.—E. Adams.

N.B. The above emphasises one aspect of the Truth which some extremists need to take to heart. There is a happy medium between refusing to walk with “those in error,” and declining to have fellowship with any who fail to pronounce all our shibboleths.—A.W.P.