

**Volume 21—Studies in the Scriptures—September, 1942****DIVINE HEALING.**

What are the duties and privileges of the Christian when he falls ill? First, endeavour to ascertain the occasion and cause of his sickness. As we have intimated in the previous articles, many physical ailments are due to inattention unto the most simple and obvious principles of hygiene. Much illness is brought about by our own carelessness and folly. Those guilty of gluttony are inviting trouble. But there are various forms of gluttony as well as degrees thereof. There is an intemperance of quality as well as of quantity. They who disdain plain and wholesome food and who concentrate principally on fancy things and rich diet must not be surprised if their systems become upset; in such cases a two or three days complete fast, followed by a return to a simpler and saner mode of living is the best remedy. Those with weak chests should not needlessly expose themselves to the night air. Wet shoes are to be removed as soon as possible if colds are to be avoided. If we ignore the dictates of common prudence then we may easily discover what has injured and how to correct it.

But suppose upon careful reflection we are unable to trace our present ill health to any physical neglect or folly—then what are we to do? Seek to ascertain the *moral cause* thereof. “Let us search and try our ways” (Lam. 3:40), making an honest endeavour to find out what it is which has grieved the Spirit. If conscience is allowed to do her work, the probability is we shall soon be made aware that there is an Achan in our camp, an Achan which must be dealt with unsparingly if we are to enjoy the smile of the Lord again. If we have set up some idol it must be thrown down: if we have indulged some lust it must be mortified: if we have entered a forbidden path it must be forsaken: if we have willfully departed from some path of duty it must be returned unto, otherwise “some worse thing” is likely to come upon us. All known sin must be judged, mourned over, confessed in detail unto God: “I said I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD, and Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin” (Psa. 32:5).

But suppose after an honest and careful review of my ways conscience does not convict me of any particular sin, then what must I do? Prayerfully seek the help of the Holy Spirit. Get down before the Lord and cry, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psa. 139:23, 24). Though there may be nothing in my outward conduct for which the Lord is chastising me, yet it is likely there is something *within*, against which He is intimating His displeasure and for which He requires me to humble myself. A spirit of selfishness, the allowing of pride, the workings of self-will, the stirrings of rebellion when Divine Providence crosses me, the exercise of self-righteousness may be the plague-spot of my soul which needs purging. In the rush and pressure of every-day life the “little foxes which spoil the vines” (Song. 2:15) are apt to be neglected, and if we are careless be not surprised if we are placed on our backs for a season. We must take time for reflection and opportunity for closer dealings between the soul and God so that the hidden things of darkness may be brought out into the light and faithfully dealt with.

“If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will *heal* their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). This passage bears directly on our present subject and contains important and definite instruction for us. First, it shows that God sends physical judgments upon His people because of their transgressions. Second, it makes known what they are to

do when the Divine rod falls upon them. Third, it contains a pertinent and precious promise for faith to lay hold of. Against this it may be objected that such a passage is not applicable to us—that God’s dealings with His people in this Christian era are on very different principles than those which actuated Him under the Mosaic economy—that He dealt with them according to the Law, whereas He deals with us according to the riches of His grace. Such a contention is entirely unscriptural. God’s governmental dealings are the same in all dispensations. Maintaining the requirements of holiness and exercising mercy toward the penitent have ever characterized God’s “ways.” Had the Old Testament regime been one of stern and unrelieved justice, there had been no “healing” promised upon repentance, for Law as such knows no pity and shows no mercy.

Let it be carefully noted that the teaching of the New Testament is precisely the same on this subject as in the Old. “For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily eateth and drinketh damnation (judgment) to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. *For this cause* many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep” (1 Cor. 11:29, 30). The Corinthians had been guilty of profaning the Lord’s Table, turning the holy Supper into a carnal feast. God would not tolerate such irreverence and impiety in this dispensation any more than He would under the Mosaic and evidenced His sore displeasure by visiting them with *a temporal judgment*, smiting them in their bodies. Thus this passage is strictly analogous to that in 2 Chronicles 7. But more—as there, so here the remedy is also graciously made known: “For if we would judge ourselves we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). If the Corinthians would unsparingly condemn themselves for their unseemly conduct and mourn over it before God, His judgment would be removed and the many weak and sickly ones recovered and not be made to “sleep” or die. If we sit in judgment on ourselves we shall not be plagued by the Lord. “But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world” (v. 32): God chastising us here that we may escape eternal woe hereafter.

Let us return then to 2 Chronicles 7:14. There we find the Lord’s people being dealt with for their sins. A temporal judgment bears heavily upon them: how is deliverance therefrom to be obtained? First, they must “humble themselves.” And what is meant by that? The same as in 1 Corinthians 11:31 “judge ourselves.” A word in Leviticus 26:41 will supply the needed help: “if then their uncircumcised hearts be humbled and they then *accept of the punishment* of their iniquity, then will I remember My covenant.” To “humble” ourselves beneath the rod of God is to cease asking, What have I done to deserve this? to stop resisting the rod, and meekly bowing thereto—acknowledge that my wicked conduct *deserves* it. David “humbled” himself when he owned, “I know, O LORD, that Thy judgments are right, and that Thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me” (Psa. 119:75). To “judge ourselves” is to take sides with God against ourselves. Not until we do so does the rod begin to obtain its designed effect. The “peaceable fruit of righteousness” is only obtained under Divine chastisement “unto them which are *exercised* thereby” (Heb. 12:11)—exercised in their conscience. We must “*hear* the rod” (Micah 6:9) if we are to profit therefrom, and when we have heard its rebuking message, *endorse* the righteousness of it.

“If My people which are called by My name shall humble themselves”: that is the first thing, and it is vain to proceed further until it be properly attended to for pride is more hateful to God than anything else. “And pray” is the next thing. Until we have truly humbled ourselves before God there can be no real *prayer*—but having taken our place in the dust and condemned ourselves—then may we make known our requests unto Him. And what is it, under such circum-

stances, that we most need to pray for? Surely for a deeper sense of His holiness and of our vile-ness, for a contrite and broken heart, for faith in His mercy, for cleansing and restoration to fel-lowship. Such requests issue not from the Pharisee, but they *are* the breathings of humility. “And seek My face”: is that but a repetition of the previous clause? No, it goes further: it expresses increased definiteness, diligence and fervour. The Omniscient One cannot be imposed upon by mere lip service. He requires the *heart*. There has to be more than a bare asking, namely, a “seeking,” and such a seeking that we actually “draw near” and have a face-to-face meeting with Him whom we have displeased. God will not gloss over our sins, nor must we.

“And turn from their wicked ways.” It was their departure from the paths of righteousness and entering into forbidden territory which brought down upon them the displeasure and rod of the Holy One. Therefore if they are to be delivered from His judgment they must of necessity forsake their sins. “Turn from their wicked ways” with loathing and abhorrence, with no secret reserve but with firm purpose of heart to abandon them and go back to them no more (Psa. 85:8). Repentance is something more than a sorrowing over the past: it includes the resolution there shall be no repetition in the future. Idols must be destroyed and not put away in a cupboard from which they may be taken out again. “Then will I hear from Heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will *heal* their land” (2 Chron. 7:14). Here is the gracious promise. But mark well its open-ing “Then”—only when its preceding conditions have been fully met—we have no warrant to look for its fulfillment until its qualifying terms are observed by us. Note, too, its scope: hearing from God is granted, forgiveness is assured, and healing is available for faith to claim.—A.W.P.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

#### 24. *The Way of Salvation: Matthew 7:14, 15.*

As Christ was the antitype of Melchizedek and Aaron, the antitype of David and Solomon, so also was He the Antitypical Moses (Deut. 18:18) and Samuel and therefore in the fulfillment of His commission He could say unto His hearers, "I set before you the way of life and the way of death" (Jer. 21:8). This is precisely what He did in the verses before us: He likens our passage through life to a journey—a journey from time unto eternity. There are but two possible destinations unto which each of us is traveling, for we are treading the path which leads to heavenly bliss or the road which conducts to the eternal torments of Hell. That we may ascertain which of those ways we are on Christ gave a brief and clearly-identifying description of each of them, defining the entrance thereto, the breadth thereof, and the numbers thereon. God has ordained two distinct places to be the final abodes of men after this life and between them He has fixed a great gulf so that none can pass from the one to the other (Luke 16:26), and equally great is the distance and the difference between the ways leading to them and the character and conduct of those walking along the one and the other, for the former are the children of God, whereas the latter are the children of the Devil.

This drawing such drastic lines of discrimination, this definite and circumscribed classification, is not at all acceptable to those who traverse the spacious road leading to destruction. They pride themselves on their broadmindedness and liberality and resent anything which suggests that all is not well with them. They know their characters are not white yet would not allow for a moment they were black and therefore persuade themselves they are a shade midway between. They may not be good enough for Heaven, but they are quite sure they are not bad enough for Hell. That is why the popish invention of a "purgatory" is so popular with multitudes of people and just as they would fondly believe there is another *place* besides Heaven and Hell so they like to think there is another *class* besides saints and sinners. But if our thoughts be formed according to the teaching of Holy Writ we are shut up to this inevitable and sole alternative: Light or darkness, Truth or error, Christ or Belial, holiness or sin, salvation or damnation.

Christ began this solemn and searching portion of His Sermon with the exhortation, "Enter ye in at the strait gate," which we understand to mean first, jettison all your own ideas and receive the Truth as a little child (Matt. 18:3), bowing to its sentence of condemnation. Second, abandon your course of self-pleasing, bewail your rebellion against God and set your heart firmly against sin. Third, surrender yourself to God's righteous claims and yield to the Lordship of Christ. That exhortation is enforced by the following reason: "*for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there by which go in thereat*" (Matt. 7:13). All who are unconverted proceed along it. "It hath in it various paths suited to men's different humours and inclinations. The covetous and the spendthrift, the profligate and the hypocrite, the antinomian and the Pharisee, the sons and daughters of pleasure, the grave designing politicians and proud philosophers, decent moralists and infamous debauchees, have their several paths and their select companies; they mutually despise and condemn each other, yet they all keep one another in countenance by agreeing to oppose the holy ways of the Lord" (Thomas Scott).

Yet pleasant as the broad way may be to the flesh and popular as it is with the masses, it ends in unutterable woe and everlasting torments. How necessary it is, then, that each of us should give heed to that injunction, "Ponder the path of thy feet" (Prov. 4:26). Men are ready enough to

do so in temporal, why not so in spiritual? They do not enter a train or even a bus without first ascertaining where it is bound: then why not pause and ask, Where will this godless mode of life take me? In which direction are my feet pointed: Heavenward or Hellward? So immeasurable is the distance betwixt those two abodes, so vast is the difference between Life and Destruction, that we are called upon to exercise the utmost care and conscience in using every Divinely prescribed means for attaining the one and escaping the other. In the verses we are now considering Christ faithfully warns us that if we are to have a well-grounded hope of attaining the Home of the blessed we must give heed to that commandment, "Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil" (Exo. 23:2).

There appears to have been some uncertainty in the minds of our translators concerning the exact relation between verse 14 and its immediate context, for it will be observed that they have suggested "How" as an alternative to its opening "Because." In the preceding verse our Lord had given a brief but emphatic exhortation which He has followed with a solemn reason to enforce the same. What, then, is the precise force of verse 14 which obviously returns to the original exhortation? If we take the marginal rendering, verse 14 constitutes an *exclamation*, occasioned by what has been said of the broad way and the multitudes which choose to tread it. But if we take it as it reads and which we regard as preferable, then verse 14 contains an *amplification*. First informing us that entering in at the strait gate is not the end itself, but only a means thereto, for it gives entrance to the "narrow way" which has to be traversed if Life is to be obtained. Second it plainly announces that the walk thereon will be both difficult and lonely, for only the "few" succeed in finding it. And third it offers encouragement or presents a powerful incentive by assuring its travelers that Life lies at the end of it.

It seems to us there is yet another way of ascertaining the relation of verse 14 to its context and that is by linking it not with the whole of the preceding verse but with its last clause. Thus, "and many there be which go in thereat, *because* strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life." Considered thus it is a word of *explanation*, informing us why the multitudes prefer the road which leads to destruction—the only alternative path repels them. The straitness of its entrance and the narrowness of its course presents no attraction for the lovers of fleshly license and worldly pursuits and pleasures. On the contrary, the way which leads unto Life is diametrically opposed to their ideas and inclinations. They may offer a hundred excuses why they seek not the narrow way, but the real one is that they have no heart for it. As a fish is out of its native element when brought from the water and placed on the land, so the unregenerate have no relish for godliness. None but those who have communicated to them a new nature will desire to tread the Highway of Holiness.

"Because strait (or "narrow") is the gate" (Matt. 7:14). We have already pondered this expression last month, yet so little is it understood and so much is it contradicted by the claptrap evangelism of our day that a further word on it is called for. Place by the side of it another of our Lord's savings: "*How hard* shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" (Matt. 19:23). How far removed is that from the idea now so prevalent! Do not thousands who take the lead in tract distribution, open air work, Gospel-hall and Mission-hall services suppose it is just as easy for a rich man to be saved as a poor one, seeing that all which either of them has to do is "simply believe the record which God has given of His son"? Ah, my reader, the devils believe the whole of that record (James 2:19): believe in His Deity (Matt. 8:29), His virgin birth, His

atoning death, His triumphant resurrection, but does their belief make them any less devilish in character? So of the vast majority of those who profess to have received Christ as their personal Saviour—has their believing of the Gospel made them less carnal and worldly, more truthful with their fellows, more honest in their business dealings, less selfish—if it has not, what is such “believing” worth? Less than nothing!

If saving faith were nothing but an act of the mind, an assent to the Divine testimony, then it *would be* just as easy for a millionaire to be saved as a pauper. But it is “with the *heart* man believeth unto righteousness” (Rom. 10:10) and the heart is the seat of the *affections*, and how can a person hate what he loves or love what he hates? Can he do so by a mere “act of the will”? Of course not: it is contrary to nature. A miracle of grace has to be performed within him first. His heart must be “renewed”—radically changed—before its affections will move in a different direction. We are told that “the disciples were astonished at His words” (Mark 10:24), so they, too, were labouring under the delusion that salvation was a simple matter for anybody. “But Jesus answered again and saith unto them, Children, how *hard* is it for them that trust in riches to enter into the kingdom of God!” Faith is an attitude of heart Godward, and where material wealth is made the heart’s sufficiency in connection with temporal supplies, how can it reverse its entire trend and trust God for spiritual and eternal things?

“It is easier (continued Christ) for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God” (v. 25). Now face the issue frankly, dear reader: does that declaration of the Lord Jesus denote that salvation is to be obtained cheaply, that anyone may be saved any time he is willing to be? Should it be answered, This is not a “salvation” passage. We reply, It most certainly is, for the disciples at once asked, “who then can *be saved*?” (v. 26). To which our Lord said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God, for with God all things are possible” (v. 27). How utterly erroneous, then, is the teaching that the matter of his salvation rests entirely with man’s will. They are deceivers of souls, blind leaders of the blind, who go around telling the ignorant and unwary that getting saved is an easy and simple thing. Not so, it is the most difficult thing of all; with men it is *impossible*, and the sooner this is recognized the sooner are we likely to get down on our knees and cry to God in earnest for the supernatural operations of His Holy Spirit.

Trusting in riches is far from being the only thing which hinders men from seeking God’s salvation. “How can ye believe,” said Christ on another occasion, “which receive honour one of another and seek not the honour that cometh from God only” (John 5:44)? The love of fame, seeking the approbation of our fellows is another fatal obstruction. If the first three Gospels are read attentively (John’s Gospel is for Christians: 1:16) it will be seen that the Lord Jesus was very far from teaching that the attainment of Heaven is a simple matter. He insisted that right eyes have to be plucked out (cherished lusts mortified) and right hands cut off (beloved idols destroyed—Matt. 5:29, 30). He likened the Christian unto a “house” which has to withstand “floods” and “winds” beating upon it (Matt. 7:25). He declared that in order to be His disciple a man must deny himself and take up his cross and follow Him (Matt. 16:24). Instead of promising His followers a smooth voyage through this world, He said, “If they have called the Master of the house Beelzebub, how much more them of His household?” (Matt. 10:25). Instead of teaching that a single and isolated act of faith was sufficient to secure Heaven, He said, “But he that

shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved" (Matt. 24:13). Instead of seeking to rush men into believing, He bade them "sit down and count *the cost*" (Luke 14:28).

The gate or entrance, then, is a "strait" one, for it will not admit those who are loaded with the weapons of rebellion against God, nor can they squeeze through who are walking arm in arm with the world. To enter that gate the heart has to be humbled, sinful pleasures have to be relinquished, worldly companions abandoned, Christ has to be received in all His offices. And mark it well, this "gate," is but the entrance, giving admittance to the one and only path which leadeth unto Life. That path Christ described as a "narrow way," to intimate it is no easier, wider, or more pleasant than the gate itself. In 1 Thessalonians 3:4 the cognate term is rendered "suffer tribulation." It is not on flowery beds of ease the pilgrim is conducted to the Father's House: rather does he have to force his way through briars and thorns which cut and tear the flesh. There is not one path for the Redeemer and another for the redeemed (John 10:4). His was a path of affliction and ours cannot be otherwise if we follow the example He has left us; and if we do *not* we shall not join Him on high.

"Narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life" (Matt. 7:14). As this way is entered by the heart's sincere acceptance of Christ's holy teaching, so it is traversed by the heart and life being constantly regulated thereby. They who tread this narrow way heed not the counsel of the ungodly (Psa. 1:21), lean not unto their own understanding (Prov. 3:5), and follow not "the customs of the people" (Jer. 10:3). Rather are the believer's thoughts formed by the Scriptures and his conduct directed by its statutes, so that God's Word becomes to him in fact and experience "a lamp unto his feet and a light unto his path" (Psa. 119:105). The narrow way is strictly marked and exactly defined in the Divine Charter and along it the Christian must go without turning aside either to the right hand or the left (Prov. 4:27). When he meets with an enemy that enemy must be overcome, or he will be overcome by him. The going is strenuous and arduous for the whole of it is up hill. Let anyone who thinks otherwise read Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress" and see if that deeply-taught soul pictured Pilgrim's course to the Celestial City as all smooth sailing. Alas that so much of the modern preaching is the very reverse of what is contained in that faithful and helpful work.

And why is the Way such a "narrow" one? Because it is a single path, whereas the way of death is manifold, containing sundry avenues. Just as Truth is one but error is a many-headed monster, so the highway of holiness is a single track in contrast from the numerous pavements in the broad road which leads to destruction. It is "narrow" because those on it are shut in by the Divine commands, which make all else forbidden territory. It is "narrow" because it excludes all fleshly license and lawless liberty. It is "narrow" because it can only be trodden by faith, and faith is not only opposed to sight but sense, to self-will and self-pleasing. It is "narrow" because all other interests have to be subordinated to the pleasing of God. Thus it is a way of difficulty and displeasure to corrupt nature for our lusts are impatient of any restraint. It is natural to be more concerned about the body than the soul, to be absorbed with things present rather than with things to come and this natural tendency is fed by habit and custom: "Can the Ethiopian change his skin or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good that are accustomed to do evil" (Jer. 13:23).

Walking along the Narrow Way denotes a steady perseverance in faith and obedience to God in Christ. It signifies the overcoming of all opposition and the rejecting of all temptations to turn

off into what Bunyan terms "Bypath meadow." That narrow way must be followed no matter how much it may militate against my worldly interests. Our minds, our affections, our wills, our speeches and actions have all to be brought within the compass of God's Holy Word, within the compass of both His Law and His Gospel. At ten fundamental points our liberty is circumscribed by the Law, nor is the Gospel any less strict. Our natural desire unto self-confidence and self-sufficiency, self-complacency and self-righteousness is sternly repressed by it. The duties which the Lord has enjoined must be discharged conscientiously and circumspectly. Bounds are prescribed to our thoughts and affections: though certain things are lawful yet they are not expedient, and if things indifferent are used immoderately we sin therein. Good works are to be performed from a holy principle, in a holy manner, with a holy design and any failure therein is sin, for sin is a "missing the mark."

The obedience of the Christian is very precise, for not only must the rule be strictly observed but the motive must be pure—the pleasing and glorifying of God. Even our prayers must be according to the Divine will or they are not answered. Those who walk thus are bound to be thought singular and peculiar. Their Lord has faithfully warned them beforehand, "If the world hate you, ye know it hated Me before you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own, but because ye are not . . . the world hateth you" (John 15:18, 19). And mark it well my reader, it was not the profane and heathen world that hated Christ but the professing and religious world, and so it is still. If by grace you are enabled to tread the narrow way it will be church members, professing Christians who will say, "Such strictness is not required. I cannot see why you wish to cut yourself off from us." If you refuse to imitate their laxity, they will sneer at your "holy preciseness" and mock at such "out-of-date Puritanism." Ah, journeying along the narrow way means swimming against the tide of popular opinion.

"Narrow is the way which leadeth unto Life" (Matt. 7:14). By "Life" is meant that glorious state of unclouded fellowship with God, the heart's being satisfied with the realization of His unspeakable excellence and with the fullness of joy there is in His immediate presence. Even now the real Christian has the promise, yea the earnest of it, but Life in its fullness, in its unalloyed blessedness, in its ineffable consummation is yet *future*, as is clear from its being placed over against "Destruction" (v. 13). "And few there be that find it" (v. 14). So let not the saint be discouraged because he finds his path so unpopular and lonely a one—his Master declared it would be so. This is one of the surest indexes that he is on the right road. And why is it that so few "find" it? Because so few diligently seek it. The great crowd of religious professors imagine they are already *on* it, and therefore they heed not that word, "Ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein" (Jer. 6:16). We need to *inquire* for it. Where? In God's Word, and then *follow* it, putting into practice what we already know.

Even when a servant of God describes the Narrow Way to professing Christians they heed him not, but charge him with teaching salvation by works and bringing souls into bondage, knowing not that the Gospel is the handmaid of the Law and not its enemy (Rom. 3:31). Saving faith not only trusts in Christ but follows Him. It not only believes God's promises but obeys His precepts. Saving faith is a fruitful thing, abounding in good works. It enables its possessor to endure trials, resist the Devil, and overcome the world (1 John 5:4). None tread the Narrow Way save those who make vital godliness their chief concern—the main business of life. Hence we see why it is that the vast majority of our fellow-men and women, yea, and of professing Chris-



tians also, will fail to reach Heaven: it is because they prefer sin to holiness, indulging the lusts of the flesh to walking according to the Scriptures, self to Christ, the world to God, the broad way to the narrow. They are unwilling to forsake their sins, destroy their idols, turn their backs on the world, and submit to Christ as *Lord*.—A.W.P.

## THE LIFE OF ELIJAH.

### 33. *His Last Task.*

After the death of Ahab the judgments of God began to fall heavily upon his family. Of his immediate successor we are told, "Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel. And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, and walked in the way of his father, and in the way of his mother, and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin: For he served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel according to all that his father had done" (1 Kings 22:51-53). Unspeakably solemn is that. The three and a half years' famine, the exposure of Baal's impotence, the slaying of his prophets on Carmel and the awe-inspiring dealings of God with his father were all known to Ahaziah—but they produced no salutary effect upon him, for he refused to take them to heart. Heedless of those dire warnings he went on recklessly in sin, continuing to "serve Baal and worship him." His heart was fully set in him to do evil, and therefore was he cut off in his youth; nevertheless even in his case mercy was mingled with justice, for "space for repentance" was granted him ere he was removed from this scene.

"Then Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab" (2 Kings 1:1). In fulfillment of Balaam's prophesy (Num. 24:17) David had conquered the Moabites so that they became his "servants" (2 Sam. 8:2). They continued in subjection to the kingdom of Israel until the time of its division, when their visage and tribute was transferred to the kings of Israel, as those of Edom remained to the kings of Judah—the tribute which the Moabites rendered unto the king of Israel being "a hundred thousand lambs and a hundred thousand rams with the wool" (2 Kings 3:4). But after the death of Ahab they revolted. Therein we behold the Divine providence crossing Ahaziah in his affairs. This rebellion on the part of Moab should be regarded in the light of "when a man's ways please the LORD, He maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him" (Prov. 16:7)—but when our ways displease Him, evil from every quarter menaces us. Temporal as well as spiritual prosperity depends entirely on God's blessing. When any behave ill to us it should make us at once examine our conduct toward God. To make His hand more plainly apparent He frequently punishes the wicked after the similitude of their sins. He did so to Ahab's son—having turned from the Lord, Moab was moved to rebel against him.

What has just been pointed out concerns the *governmental* dealings of God and illustrates an important principle in His "ways" with a nation. We mean it treats of that which relates to time and not to eternity, to the workings of Divine Providence and not to the sphere of salvation. Nations as such have only a temporal existence, though the individuals which comprise them have an eternal destiny. The prosperity or adversity of a nation is determined by its attitude and conduct toward God—directly so by those who have His living Oracles in their hands—indirectly so with the heathen. Their case being determined by their conduct toward His people. The Old Testament supplies us with so many examples of this that he who runs may read. The attitude of a nation toward God is to be gauged not so much by the general deportment of its people as by the character of its governors or government. The two are of course intimately related, for where a majority of the subjects are pious they will not tolerate wickedness in high places. On the other hand when those who lead and rule set an evil example it cannot be expected that those who follow will excel them in righteousness. Whatever be the particular form of government in a coun-

try, or whichever party is in power, it is the character and enactments of its executives that are the deciding factor, for they are the ones holding the positions of chief responsibility in the sight of God.

In avowedly “Christian” countries like Great Britain and the U.S.A., the churches regulate the pulse of the nation. They act as the “salt” upon the corporate body and when their ways please the Lord, He gives them favour in the eyes of those round about them. When the Holy Spirit is unhindered His power is manifested, not only in calling out the elect, but in subduing sin in the non-elect and by causing the machine of the State to support godliness, as was more or less noticeably the case a hundred years ago. But when error comes into the churches and discipline is relaxed, the Spirit is grieved and His power is withheld and the evil effects of this become more and more apparent in the country by a rising tide of lawlessness. If the churches persist in a downward course then the Spirit is quenched and “Ichabod” is written over them, as is the case today. Then it is that the restraining hand of God is removed and an orgy of licentiousness comes in. Then it is the government becomes an empty title, for those in power have no power except what the people have delegated to them and therefore they act in accord with the depraved desires of the masses. This, then, is ever the order—turning from the true God, turning to false gods and then the disturbance of the peace—either social revolution or international war.

Ahaziah “served Baal and worshipped him and provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel” (1 Kings 22:53). The Lord God is a Jealous God, jealous of His Truth, jealous of His honour and when those calling themselves His people turn unto other gods His wrath is kindled against them. What tremendous advances have been made by Romanism during our own lifetime! What a travesty of the Divine character has been set forth by the major portion of Protestantism—a “god” whom no one fears! What a mangling of the Gospel has there been in the “orthodox” sections of Christendom, whereby “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4) has displaced the Christ of Holy Writ. Little wonder that in the inevitable reaction the multitudes have made gods of mammon and pleasure and that the nation puts its trust in its armed forces instead of the arm of the Lord. Here and there was an Elijah who raised his voice in testimony to the living God and in denouncing modern forms of Baal worship, but who gave ear to them? Certainly not the churches, for they closed their pulpits against them so that like the Tishbite of old they were forced into isolation and virtual retirement—and now it seems their last task before God calls them hence to pronounce sentence of death upon the whole apostate system.

“And provoked to anger the LORD God of Israel . . . Then Moab rebelled against Israel” (1 Kings 22:53 – 2 Kings 1:1). Though those two statements are separated by the ending of the first book of Kings and the beginning of the second, the connection is too obvious to be missed. It is the connection of cause and effect, the latter making manifest the former. For many years Moab had been tributary to Israel but now they threw off the yoke. And have we not lived to witness a similar thing? First Ireland broke away from Britain, now India is kicking over the traces and even Australia is showing restiveness. Ah, my reader, the Bible is no defunct book recording historical events of the remote past, but a *living* Book, enunciating vital principles applicable to every age and describing things as they are today. History repeats itself, not only because human nature is fundamentally the same in all ages, but also because the “ways” of God, the principles of His government, remain unchanged. As the Lord God was provoked by Ahaziah so He has been provoked by the churches, the politicians and the people of Great Britain and as His anger

was evidenced by His moving Moab to seek her independence so His displeasure is now seen in His causing one dependency after another to break away from the “Mother country.”

“And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick” (2 Kings 1:2). First, we would note that this verse opens with the word “And” which appears to intimate the king’s response or rather lack of response to what is recorded in the previous verse. What is *not* found here is solemn and informative, revealing as it does the character of Ahaziah. There was no turning to the Lord for guidance and help. There was no humbling of himself before God and inquiring why this disturbance had entered his realm. Nothing happens by chance—and the curse causeless does not come (Prov. 26:2)—therefore the king’s duty was to fast and pray and ascertain what it was that had displeased the Lord. No, we take that back: it would have been downright mockery for him to have done any such thing. There was no need to inquire of the Lord: the king *knew* quite well what was wrong—he was serving and worshipping Baal, and until his idols were abolished it would be nothing but play-acting, a pious farce, for him to call upon the name of the Lord. Does the reader agree? *Does he?* does she? If not, carefully re-read this paragraph. If you concur, is not the application to our own national situation clearly apparent? Unspeakably solemn—yes, indescribably awful—yes. But if we face facts, things as they really are, the conclusion is inescapable.

Let us call attention to another thing which is absent from 2 Kings 1:2—Ahaziah not only failed spiritually but naturally, too. What ought to have been his reaction to this revolt of Moab? Why to have dealt with it with a firm hand and nipped it in the bud. That was obviously his duty as king. Instead he followed the line of least resistance and devoted himself to pleasure. Instead of taking his place at the head of his army and putting down this rebellion by force, he seems to have luxuriated in the palace. Must we not say in such circumstances that God had given him up to a spirit of madness? He shrank in cowardly fear from the camp and the dangers of the field, and leaving Moab to do as she pleased, without attempting her re-subjugation, led a life of self-indulgence. Perhaps he recalled the fate which had so recently overtaken his father on the battlefield and decided that “discretion is the better part of valour.” But there is no escaping the hand of God when He is determined to smite: we are just as liable to meet with an “accident” in the shelter of our home as if we were exposed to the deadliest weapons on the battlefield. The analogy between Ahaziah’s effeminacy and ineptitude and the policy followed by our Government during the past ten years is too patent to need comment.

“And Ahaziah fell down through a lattice in his upper chamber that was in Samaria, and was sick.” Here was where mercy was mingled with justice: here was where “space for repentance” was granted the idolatrous king. O how longsuffering is God! Ahaziah’s fall did not prove immediately fatal though it placed him on a bed of sickness where he had opportunity to “consider his ways.” And how often the Lord deals thus, both with nations and with individuals. The Roman empire was not built in a day, nor was it destroyed in a day. Many a blatant rebel against Heaven has been pulled up suddenly in his evil career. An “accident” overtook him and though it may have deprived him of a limb yet not of his life. Such may have been the experience of some who reads these lines. If so, we would say to you with all earnestness, Redeem the time that is now left you. You might now be in Hell, but God has given you a further season (brief at the most) to think of eternity—and prepare for it. O that His goodness may lead you to repentance! Today if you will hear His voice harden not your heart. Throw down the weapons of your war-

fare against Him and be reconciled to Him, for how shall you escape the everlasting burnings if you neglect His so-great salvation?

Passing from the individual application of our passage let us note how accurately it accords with God's dealings with Great Britain. Have we as a nation received no solemn warning from God? Has not His hand of judgment been manifestly laid upon us? Yes verily, for at the very beginning of this century the Lord frowned upon us and for many months our pride was humbled upon the veldts of South Africa. Did that cause us to change our ways? Alas, the rate of our downward course has been accelerated! Then came the most serious crisis in our history, when literally millions of the flower of our manhood were cut down and when for many months the rest of the nation faced the peril of starvation. God did not then "make a full end" of us, though His blows shook us to the foundation. Yet instead of turning to God, our nation has departed farther and farther from Him. The loss of nearly all our military equipment, the Dunkirk evacuation, the continuous blitzing of our cities has not subdued us; space for repentance has been given us but we have repented not, rather have we openly and blatantly defied the Most High in every manner possible.

"And he sent messengers and said unto them, Go inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron whether I shall recover of this disease" (2 Kings 1:2). First, God crossed him in his affairs and then He smote him in his body. We have called attention to what this evil king did *not* do, now we turn to consider the course which he actually followed. Neither of those judgments softened him and having lived without God in prosperity so in adversity he despised His chastening hand. Saul in his extremity had inquired of a witch, only to hear of his immediate doom. So Ahaziah now had recourse to the demon-gods of the heathen. He was evidently uneasy at the present state of his health, so he sent some of his servants to ascertain of an idolatrous oracle whether or not he should recover from his affliction—proof that his soul was in a worse state than his body. The "Baalim" was a general epithet for the false gods, each having his own peculiar office and district, hence the distinguishing titles of Baalzebub, Baalpeor, Baalzephon, Baalbireth. "Baalzebub" was the idol of Ekron, a city of Philistia, a country noted for "soothsayers" (Isa. 2:6).

This "Baalzebub" signifies "the lord of a fly or flies," probably because their country was infested with flies (as modern travelers still report), they supposed he protected them from the diseases which they spread. In Matthew 12:24 we find Beelzebub (the Greek form of spelling) identified as "the prince of the demons," which intimates that under various names and images evil spirits were actually worshipped as gods by the heathen—as is plainly stated in 1 Corinthians 10:20: "the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice *to demons* and not to God." It would appear that at the time of Ahaziah, the priests of Baal had through their incantations of evil spirits acquired celebrity for their knowledge of future events, much as the oracle of Delphos was held in high repute in Greece some years later. Believing that the idol at Ekron could foresee and foretell things to come Ahaziah paid him homage. The exceeding sinfulness of such practices is placed beyond dispute by such passages as Leviticus 20:6, 7; Deuteronomy 18:10; 1 Chronicles 10:13. Thus those who consult fortune tellers, astrologers, and "spiritualists" are guilty of a fearful sin and expose themselves unto the powers of evil.

"When a king of Israel sent to inquire of a heathen oracle he proclaimed to the Gentiles his wont of confidence in Jehovah: as if the only nation favoured with the knowledge of the true God had been the only nation in which no God was known. This was peculiarly dishonourable

and provoking to Jehovah” (Thomas Scott). The action of Ahaziah was indeed a deliberate and public rejection of the Lord—a defiant choice of those ways which had called down the wrath of Heaven upon his father. It could not pass unnoticed and accordingly He who is King of kings, as well as the God of Israel, specifically calls him to account. Elijah was sent to meet the king’s messengers with the announcement of certain death: “But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron?” (2 Kings 1:3). Nothing escapes the observation of Him with whom we have to do. His eyes are ever upon all the ways of men, whether they be monarchs or menials: none are too high or independent to be above His control, and none are too low or insignificant to be overlooked by Him. All we do or say or think is perfectly known to the Lord, and in that Day we shall be called upon to render a full account.

“But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say unto them, Is it not because there is not a God in Israel, that ye go to inquire of Baalzebub the god of Ekron.” The Hebrew is more expressive and emphatic than the English: “Is it because there is no God, none in Israel? that you turn for information to the emissaries of Satan?” Not only had the true and living God made Himself known to Israel, but He was in *covenant relationship* with them. This it is which explains “the angel of the LORD” addressing Himself to Elijah on this occasion, emphasizing as it did that blessed relationship which the king was repudiating—it was the Angel of the Covenant (Exo. 23:23, etc.). As such Jehovah had given clear demonstration of Himself to Ahaziah in his own lifetime. Alas how pertinent to our own day is the expostulation of the Prophet: is there no God in Heaven that Britain should now base its hope of victory on the achievements of the Russians? Did He fail our fathers when they cried to Him as the Spanish armada came forth bent on their destruction? Did He fail Cromwell and his men? How the mighty are fallen! And does not this expostulation apply to many individuals who profess to be Christians? If God be God why seek satisfaction in the things of the world? why lean on the creature? It is practical atheism which lies at the bottom of forgetfulness of God and departure from Him (Titus 1:16).

“Now therefore thus saith the LORD, Thou shalt not come down from that bed on which thou art gone up, but shalt surely die” (2 Kings 1:4). Having reproved the awful sin of Ahaziah, the servant of God now pronounces judgment on him. Here then was the last and solemn task of Elijah—to pass the capital sentence upon the apostate king! Unto the widow of Zarephath God had made him “the savour of life unto life,” but unto Ahab and now to his son he became “the savour of death unto death.” Varied indeed are the tasks assigned unto the ministers of the Gospel, according as they are called upon to comfort God’s people and feed His sheep, or warn the wicked and denounce evildoers. Thus it was with their great Exemplar: both benedictions and maledictions were found on His lips, though most congregations are far more familiar with the former than the latter—it will be found that His “Blesseds” in Matthew 5 are balanced by an equal number of “Woes” in Matthew 23. It should be duly noted that those “Woes” were uttered by the Lord Jesus at *the close* of His public ministry, and though the end of the world may not be at hand (no one on earth knows) yet it seems evident that the end of the present “Order” of things, “civilization,” is imminent and therefore the servants of Christ have a thankless task before them today. O that grace may preserve them “Faithful unto death.”—A.W.P.



## DOCTRINE OF SAINTS' PERSEVERANCE.

### 5. *Its Springs.*

We now turn to contemplate the most important and blessed aspect of our subject, yea the very heart and crux thereof. The believer's perseverance in faith and holiness is no detached and isolated thing, but an effect of an all-sufficient *cause*. It must not be viewed as a separate phenomenon but as the fruit of Divine operations. The believer's continuance in the paths of righteousness is a miracle and a miracle necessarily requires the immediate agency of *God*. Our present concern, then, is to trace this stream back to its source and to show the springs from which this marvel issues—to admire the impregnable foundations on which it rests. Only as those springs and foundations are clearly revealed shall we ascribe the glory unto Him to whom alone it is due. Only then shall we be able to apprehend the absolute security of the saints. Only then shall we perceive the vanity and uselessness of all the Enemy's attacks upon this cardinal Truth. The perseverance of the saints is assured by so many infallible guarantees that it is difficult to know which to bring before the reader and which to omit.

The doctrine for which we are here contending follows as a logical consequence from the Divine perfections: whatever is agreeable to them and they make necessary, must perforce be true—contrariwise whatever is contrary to them and reflects dishonour upon them must be false. Now the doctrine of the saints' final perseverance is agreeable to the Divine perfections, yea, is made entirely necessary by them, and therefore must be true. And the contrary doctrine of the falling away of real saints so as to perish everlastingly is repugnant to them and reflects great dishonour upon them and therefore must be false. That which we have here briefly affirmed will be illustrated in detail and demonstrated at length in all that follows in this and **next month's article**. Summarizing what we propose to set before the reader will show that the eternal security of the Christian rests upon the good will of the Father, the mediation of the Son, and the office and operations of the Holy Spirit—and therein we have a "threefold cord" which cannot possibly be broken.

1. *The unchanging love of God.* This argument, however, is one which can have little weight with those who have imbibed Arminianism and accepted their false interpretation of John 3:16. But they who perceive the Divine love to be a discriminating and particular one and not an indefinite and general one will find here that which is sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb. If it were true that God loves the whole human race, then seeing a large part thereof is already in Hell, I could draw no assurance therefrom that I shall never perish. But when I discover that God's love is restricted to those whom He chose in Christ and that He loves them with an "everlasting love," then I unhesitatingly conclude that "many waters" cannot quench that love (Song. 8:7). It would lead too far afield for us to show wherein so many err concerning the meaning of John 3:16 or to evidence at length the discriminating character of God's love: suffice it here to point out that, "For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth" (Heb. 12:6) would be meaningless did He love everybody—the next clause, "and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth," at once defines the objects of His affection. "Jacob have I loved, but Esau have I hated" (Rom. 9:13): therefore Jacob is now in Heaven, but his brother has received the due reward of his iniquities.

"We love Him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). God does not love His people because they love Him. No, we read of "His great love wherewith He loved us even when we were dead in sins" (Eph. 2:4, 5): when we had no desire to be loved by Him, yea, when we were pro-



voking Him to His face and displaying the fierce enmity of our unrenewed hearts. God loved His people before they had an historical existence, for while they were yet sinners Christ died for them (Rom. 5:8). Why, He declares, "I have loved thee with an everlasting love" (Jer. 31:3). That love then derives not its strength or its streams from anything in *us*, but flows spontaneously from the heart of God, finding its deep wellspring within His own bosom. Since God is love He can no more cease to love than He can cease to be—and since God changes not there can be no variation and fluctuation in His love.

The object of God's love is *His Church*, which is His special delight. From all eternity He loved His elect and loved them as His elect, as having peculiar propriety in them. He loved them in Christ, chose them in Christ and blessed them with all spiritual blessings in Christ (Eph. 1:3). He loved them so as to predestinate them unto the adoption of children (Eph. 1:5). He loved their persons in Christ with the same love wherewith He loves Christ their Head (John 17:23). He loved them so as to make them "accepted in the Beloved" (Eph. 1:6). It is a love which can never decay, for it is founded on the good pleasure of His will towards them. God's love to Christ knows no change nor can it to the members of His body: "and hast loved them as Thou hast loved Me" (John 17:23), declares the Saviour, and He is speaking there as the Head of His Church. We are loved in Christ and according to the relation we stand in to Him, that is, as members to an Head—loved as freely and immutably.

Though the effects of God's love vary in their manifestations, yet there is no diminution of His affection and none in its perpetuity. Men often love those who prove otherwise than they expected and come to repent of the affection lavished upon them. But it is not so with God, for He foreknew all that ever we would be and do—our sins, unworthiness, rebellions—yet set His heart upon us notwithstanding so that He can never say we turned out other than He thought we would. Had God's love been set upon us because of some good or excellency in us, then when that goodness declined, His love would diminish too. "God foresaw all the sins you would ever have: it was all present to His sacred mind, and yet He loved you, and loves you still" (C. H. Spurgeon). The child of God may for a season depart from the paths of righteousness and then will his Father visit his transgression with the rod and his iniquity with stripes, "nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not make void from him nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psa. 89:32, 33), is His own declaration.

Because God's love is uncreated, it is unchanging. God does not love by fits and starts but forever. Because it is founded upon nothing in its object, no change in that object can forfeit it. In every state and condition into which the elect can come, God's love unto them is invariable and unalterable, constant and permanent. We may repent of the love which we bestowed on some of our fellows because we were unable to make them good: the more we loved them the more they took advantage of it. Not so with God: whom He loves He makes holy. This is one of the effects of His love: to shed abroad His love in the hearts of its objects, to stamp His own image upon them, to cause them to walk in His fear. His love to the elect is perpetual because it is in Christ: the are joined to Christ by an union which cannot be dissolved. God must cease to love Christ their Head before He can cease to love any member of His Body. Then what madness, what blasphemy, to think of any of them perishing!

Over this blessed attribute of Divine love is written in letters of light "Semper idem," *always the same*. Those who are once the objects of God's love are so always. If God has ever loved

you, my reader, He does so today—loves you with the same love as when He gave His Son to die for you—loves you with the same love as when He sent His Holy Spirit into your heart crying, “Abba Father”—loves you with the same love as He will in Heaven throughout the endless ages. And nothing can or shall separate you from that love (see Rom. 8:38, 39). A preacher once called upon a farmer. As he approached his residence he saw over the barn a weather-vane and on the top of it in large letters the text “God is love.” When the farmer appeared the preacher pointed to that vane and said in tones of rebuke, “Do you imagine God’s love is as variable as the weather?” No, said the farmer, I put that text there to remind me that no matter what the direction of the wind, God is love!

“His love no end or measure knows,  
No change can turn its course,  
Immutably the same it flows  
From one eternal source.”

2. *The immutability of God.* The guarantee for the perpetuity of God’s love unto His people is found in the immutability of His nature. From everlasting Jehovah is God: underived, independent, self-sufficient—nothing can in anywise affect Him or produce any change in Him. Says the Psalmist, “Of old hast Thou laid the foundation of the earth and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment: as a vesture shalt Thou change them and they shall be changed. But Thou art the same and Thy years shall have no end” (102:25-27). This is one of the excellencies of the Creator which distinguishes Him from all creatures. God is perpetually the same: subject to no change in His being, attributes, or determinations. All that He is today He ever has been and ever will be. He cannot change for the better for He is already perfect and being perfect He cannot change for the worse. He only can say, I AM THAT I AM” (Exo. 3:14). Unaffected by anything outside Himself, improvement or deterioration is impossible. His glory is an unfading one.

Now in this immutability of God lies the eternal security of His people. “For I am the LORD, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed” (Mal. 3:6). If any of them were lost, “consumed” by His wrath, then He must change in His attitude toward them, so that those whom He once loved He now hates. But that would also involve an alteration in His purpose concerning them, so that whereas He has appointed them “to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9), He must consign them over to destruction. How entirely different would such a variable and fickle character be from the God of Holy Writ! Of Jehovah it is said, “He is of one mind, and who can turn Him?” (Job 23:13). It is because God changes not His people are not consumed: His love wanes not, His will is stable, His word sure. Because He is “The Father of lights, with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning” (James 1:17) we have an immoveable rock on which to stand while everything around us is being swept away.

The foundation of our preservation unto the end is the immutability of God’s being, whereunto His love is conformed, so that His everlasting Deity must undergo alteration before any of His children could perish. This is clearly the force of both Malachi 3:6 and James 1:17. In the latter the Apostle speaks of “every good gift and every perfect gift” which the saints receive from their Father, prefacing the same with, “Do not err my beloved brethren” (v. 16). The gifts bestowed upon the elect at their regeneration are not like Jonah’s gourd which flourished only for a brief season. No, they are from Him with whom is “no variableness” either in His love or

will. "For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29) or change of mind and therefore they are never revoked. Let it be noted that those words were added to clinch the certainty of the purpose of God towards the remnant of the Jews according to the election of grace. Thus the immutability of God is the guarantee of the stability of His love and the irrevocableness of His grace unto us.

3. *The irreversible purpose of God.* Having set His heart upon a chosen people, God formed a purpose of grace toward them: "having predestinated them" (Eph. 1:5) and the immutability of His being insures the fulfillment of that purpose. The Most High does not determine to do a thing at one time and decide not to do it at another. "The counsel of the LORD standeth forever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations" (Psa. 33:11)—because He has counselled everlasting glory unto His people nothing can alter it. "For the LORD of hosts hath purposed, and who shall disannul it?" (Isa. 14:27). There are indeed many changes in the external dispensations of His providence toward His elect, but none concerning the thoughts of His heart for them. "I am God, and there is none like unto Me, declaring the end from the beginning and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand and I will do all My pleasure . . . I have spoken, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed, I will also do it" (Isa. 46:9-11). What a foundation is there here for faith to rest upon: the Divine will is inflexible, His counsels irreversible.

"God is not a man that He should lie, neither the son of man that He should repent" (Num. 23:19). Consider the things which move men to change their minds and alter their purposes and then mark how utterly inapplicable such things are to the Almighty. Men form a plan and then cancel it through fickleness and inconstancy: but God is immutable. Men make a promise and then revoke it because of their depravity and untruthfulness: but God is infinitely holy and cannot lie. Men devise a project and fail to carry it through because of lack of ability or power: but God is omniscient and omnipotent. Men determine a certain thing for want of foresight and because the unexpected intervenes they are thwarted: but God knows the end from the beginning. Men change their schemes because the influence or threats of superiors deter them: but God has no superior or equal and fears none. No unforeseen occasion can arise which would render it expedient for God to change His mind.

In Romans 8:28 we read of a company who are "the called according to His purpose" and what that signifies, the verses which immediately follow tell us. It was a purpose they could neither originate nor frustrate. "For whom He did foreknow" with a knowledge of approbation (contrast "I never knew you"—Matt. 7:23), "He also did predestinate," appoint and forearrange. That Divine predestination results in their being effectually called out of darkness into God's marvellous light and their being justified or accounted righteous before God because Christ's perfect obedience is reckoned to their account. And then, so infallibly certain is the accomplishment of God's purpose, the Apostle added, "and whom He justified them He also (not "will glorify," but) *Glorified.*" "God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel (the immoveable fixedness of His design), confirmed it by an oath" (Heb. 6:17). What more can we desire: the Holy One must forswear Himself before one of His own can perish!

4. *The Everlasting Covenant of God.* Having set His heart upon a special people, God formed a purpose of grace toward them and that purpose is attested and secured by formal contract.

By express stipulation the Eternal Three solemnly undertook for every heir of promise to do all for and in them, so that not one of them should perish. "I will make an Everlasting Covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good, but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:40). How comprehensive are those promises! First, Jehovah assures His people that there shall be no alteration in His good will toward them. To that it might be objected, "True, God will not turn away from them, but they may turn away from Him, yea, utterly apostatize." That is why He here declares that He will put His fear in their hearts, or grant them such supplies of grace, as to preserve them from falling away. "Were they to return to the service of Satan, He could not continue to do them good consistently with the holiness of His character but He will preserve them in such a state that He may hold fellowship with them without any impeachment of His holiness" (J. Dick).

This Covenant of Grace is made with the elect in Christ before the foundation of the world, wherein He became their "Surety" (Heb. 7:22), undertaking to discharge all their liabilities and make full satisfaction for them. Accordingly God has promised the Surety, "I will put My laws into their mind and write them upon their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people" (Heb. 8:10). Those promises are of free grace, and there is no contingency or uncertainty about them, for they are "Yea" and "Amen" in Christ (2 Cor. 1:20). Mark how God Himself regards His engagement therein—"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of My lips" (Psa. 89:34). "He will ever be mindful of His covenant" (Psa. 111:5). O what grounds for confidence, for joy, for praise is there here! Therefore may each believer affirm with David, "He hath made with me an Everlasting Covenant, ordered in all things and sure: for this is all my salvation and all my desire" (2 Sam. 23:5). "For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed; but My kindness shall not depart from thee, neither shall the covenant of My peace be removed, saith the LORD that hath mercy on thee" (Isa. 54:10).

To summarize what has yet been before us—if any saint were eventually lost, it could only be because the being and character of God Himself had undergone a change for the worse. His affections must alter so that one whom He loved must become the object of His hatred. His purpose concerning him must change so that whereas He appointed him to salvation He must consign him to destruction. He must reverse the promises made and the blessings bestowed upon him. His faithfulness must fail so that His Word can no longer be relied upon. Thus it is obvious that the alternative to what has been set forth above is unthinkable and impossible. The wisdom of God requires that appointing the end (the glorification of His people) He has also ordained the means thereto are sufficient and His power insures that those means shall prove effectual. Every perfection of God guarantees that all His people shall get safely to Heaven.—A.W.P.

### CHRISTIAN RESURRECTION.

The title of this article will probably suggest to most of our readers that we shall treat therein exclusively with the future condition of the believer's body. Really it is deplorable that such a circumscribed view should obtain so widely in this twentieth century—that "resurrection" should connote nothing more than physical resuscitation. Surely little more than a glance at the Epistles is needed to discover that in the New Testament "death" and "life" are used with a much broader and higher signification than merely physical—that "resurrection" is connected with other things than the body—that it has a present, yea a past, bearing upon the Christian as well as a future, that it has a forensic application as well as a literal. Believers are greatly the losers if they confine the resurrection to a mere emergence from the grave. The New Testament treats first of the Christian's *legal* or representative resurrection; second of his *spiritual* or regenerative one and finally of his *corporeal*. As the first is now so little apprehended by God's people we shall devote most space to it.

Resurrection presupposes death and to understand what death is we must go back to the Fall. "In Adam all die" (1 Cor. 15:22): that is the basic fact, death being the wages of sin, the penalty of the broken law (Rom. 5:12). In Adam all died: what is meant by that? This: their relationship with God was radically altered and they experienced a fearful change in themselves. More specifically: first, they ceased to be well-pleasing in the sight of their Maker, they were no longer favourably regarded by Him. Positively, they fell under His curse and became "the children of wrath." Second, they forfeited the Holy Spirit, became "alienated from the life of God" (Eph. 4:18). His image and likeness in them was greatly marred, communion with Him was severed. Third, corruption entered their bodies, the seeds of mortality obtained lodgment, disease invaded their earthly tabernacles. And, unless they are recovered from these calamities the "second death" or everlasting separation from God in endless torment in the Lake of Fire, will be the final consummation of that death which is the wages of sin.

In the sovereign grace of God it pleased Him that His chosen people should be recovered from those dreadful calamities and be spared the second death, not by revoking His sentence nor by modifying its severity but by exacting the same upon a sinless Sponsor and Substitute so that legally they died in and with Him. Christ came to earth as the Head and Representative of His people. His obedience unto death was no mere vague expedient through which mercy may be shown to all who choose to take advantage of it. The Good Shepherd gave His life for the sheep: from Bethlehem to Calvary He was acting and suffering for them. His obedience in all its perfections was theirs, just as their sin in all its aggravations was made His by imputation. As in Adam all the elect died, so also in Christ they all died. All the condemnation under which they lay was executed upon them in Christ. In Him they have met and satisfied every claim of Divine justice, so that "there is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1).

In Romans 5:14 it is affirmed that Adam was "the figure of Him that was to come," upon which it has been well remarked: "These are the two men, type and Antitype, in whom human history centers. Their relations to the one and to the other ultimately divide all men into two classes, each receiving nature and destiny from its head. All the individuals who comprise either class have been so represented by these heads that it has been justly said, 'there have been but two men in the world and two facts in human history.' The two men are Adam and Christ; the two facts are the disobedience of the former and the obedience of the latter by which many are

made righteous. By the former came ruin, by the latter came redemption; and neither ruin nor redemption can be Scripturally apprehended except as it is seen to be accomplished by these representatives and except as we apprehend the relationships expressed by being 'in Adam' or 'in Christ' " (James Inglis, 1871).

What has been just quoted above is only another way of saying that God has dealt with men throughout on the principle of one for many: true alike in the relations of nature and in the relations of grace—the many are included and represented by the one (see Rom. 5:18, 19). In the sight of God, in the accounting of His Law, every Christian has died twice—in Adam and in Christ, the former of which is more readily understood by the believer than is the other. Because Christ was their federal Head, what He did and suffered was regarded by God as His people doing and suffering. Since they were in Christ by federal constitution His death was their death, they bearing the wages of sin in the Person of their Surety. Christians could not have more really suffered the penalty than if they had been personally cast into Hell. The broken Law can no longer denounce any believer, for in the Person of Christ he has suffered its vengeance and from its threatening he can claim complete exemption by pointing to the Surety in whom he has already died.

In view of what has been pointed out above Christian readers should now have less difficulty in perceiving the force of that exhortation, "reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin" (Rom. 6:11), though for a clearer and fuller understanding thereof it will be necessary for us to give a brief exposition of its context. The chapter opens with two questions. First, "What shall we say then?" that is, what inference shall we draw from the blessed doctrine propounded in Romans 4 and 5? Second, "Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound?" In that query the Apostle anticipates an objection: "If the ungodly are justified by faith without any works of their own and if where sin has abounded grace has much more abounded (5:20), then may we not continue sinning without restraint so that grace may more and more abound?" Such has ever been the favourite, though unfounded objection, made by opposers of the Gospel. In what follows the Apostle shows that such is the believer's Union with Christ that his living in sin would be as great a contradiction in terms as to speak of a living corpse or a holy degenerate. Union with Christ is the source of purity and not of uncleanness.

"God forbid, How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?" (Rom. 6:2). This "God forbid" is Paul's usual mode of expressing denial and abhorrence. We that are "dead to sin" is literally "that died to sin," the Greek denoting a specific act of our past history. Formerly Christians were dead *in* sin, now they are dead *to* it, delivered *from* it. To many this may seem a startling statement for they are painfully conscious that sin is very much alive in them. Then exactly what is the meaning of this expression? Certainly it does not signify that Christians are dead to the *power* of sin—this verse speaks not of an exceptional attainment of a favoured and matured few, but of a fact which is true of all believers alike. It should also be carefully noted that this verse is in the form of a doctrinal statement and not an exhortation setting forth an experience to which we should aspire and after which we should strive. Nor is it something which God promises to make good unto us in the future: it is affirmed as an *accomplished fact*. The same may be remarked of all parallel passages containing similar statements.

"We that died to sin." If we carry with us into Romans 6 the truth set forth in the representative characters of the two Adams in the previous chapter, we have the key for interpreting the

expressions used in this. The suretyship of Christ and the federal nature of His atonement as the act of one for the many is brought forward into Romans 6, only with this difference: here *we* are described as doing what our Representative did; that is, the one corporate act is described from our sharing in its transaction. As we were condemned to death in the first Adam, so we endured the penalty in the last Adam. The judgment which came upon us to condemnation was once and for all executed, for “we died to sin” in the one man Christ Jesus. And how shall we live any longer therein? His first answer is we shall not, we cannot, for in the constitution which God appointed we are one with Christ and having in Him suffered the penalty of the Law we died to the guilt of sin, to its condemnation, to its power to separate us from God. “Died to sin” has no reference to any *change* wrought within Christians but relates only to their *standing* before God because of their oneness with Christ.

The force of “died to sin” is made unmistakably manifest in the verses that follow. “Know ye not that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into His death? Therefore we *were* (not “are”) buried with Him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (vv. 3, 4). It is quite needless for our present purpose to enter into a critical discussion upon the nature of the “baptism” here alluded to, whether the baptism by the Spirit which effectually joins to the Lord (1 Cor. 12:13) or water baptism to symbolize our oneness with Christ in His death—suffice it now to point out that in Scripture baptism always signifies the removing of its subject out of one condition, relation or standing, into another. Here it is affirmed that all believers have been taken out of the first Adam into Christ and were “baptized into His death.”

“For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection” (Rom. 6:5). This amplifies the preceding statement, for in this and the next two verses the Apostle shows that such is the nature of the Christian’s *union* with Christ that if he is one with Him in His death he must be equally so in His resurrection. We agree with Charles Hodge that the “we shall be” does not express futurity: “the reference is not to what is to happen hereafter, but to the certainty of sequence or causal connection: if the one thing happens, the other shall certainly follow.” The opening “For if” indicates that the Apostle is showing what logically and inevitably follows from his previous statements. The “planted together” signifies the closest union of any kind, as being incorporated or joined with. The “likeness of His resurrection” does not here (as in Phil. 3:21) signify that there is an analogy between Christ’s resurrection body and that of believers, but that they were as truly one with Him when He rose from the dead as when He died on the tree.

“Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him” (Rom. 6:6), or as it may be more literally and tersely rendered “our old man was co-crucified.” Here we have a direct answer to the question when and how Christians “died to sin.” It was when Christ was crucified. Here, too, is conclusive proof that this death to sin is not a subjective one but an objective and historical fact. There is nothing here which savours of monkish mortification or self-mutilation, for of all forms of death, crucifixion is the most impossible for one to inflict upon himself. When Paul declared, “I am crucified with Christ” (Gal. 2:20), or as the Greek signifies and as the R.V. and Bagster’s Interlinear renders it, “I have been crucified with Christ,” he gave utterance to that which is equally true of all genuine Christians—it was a past transaction and not a process now being experienced. It is also worthy of note that the verb “was crucified” in verse 5 is in the pas-

sive voice, denoting that it was accomplished wholly outside of themselves in the Person of their Head.

It is important that we define aright “our old man,” especially since the views of the older and best writers were confused thereon. Even Hodge and Haldane understood by this expression “our carnal” and “our old nature”—their experience should have taught them better, for neither the work of Christ *for* them nor the work of the Spirit *in* them has effected any change in the “flesh” or sinful nature that we all inherit from Adam. Unless we distinguish sharply between the *person* and his *nature*—as the Apostle does so emphatically in “I myself,” etc. (Rom. 7:25)—we are bound to err. That distinction was maintained and broadly asserted by Paul in another passage where he speaks of “the old man which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts” (Eph. 4:22). The “old man,” then, is our old personality or standing in Adam, as may be seen yet further from the “body of sin” being distinguished from it in this very verse.

“That the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin” (Rom. 6:6). In those words is expressed the design of our old man being crucified with Christ: it is not that at some later date the body of sin will be destroyed and that we shall be delivered from serving sin but that this purpose *was* accomplished at Calvary. The “body of sin” is synonymous with “the body of this death” in Romans 7:24, the reference being not to our physical body but to the corruptions of the old man. The “flesh with the affections and lusts” (Gal. 5:24) is termed a “body” because it is viewed as an organized entity—in Colossians 3:5 allusion is made to its “members.” In what sense was it “destroyed”? *Judicially*. It was not merely weakened, nor was it annihilated. The Greek word may be rendered “annulled.” It is used again in Hebrews 2:14 of the Devil: that tyrant has been dethroned, his power or right by virtue of conquest (at the Fall) has been rendered void. Consequently Christians are delivered from the service or slavery of sin. Death cancels all obligations. The believer is “the Lord’s freeman” (1 Cor. 7:22).

“For He that died hath been justified from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Observe the change in number here: it is no longer “we” as in each of the preceding verses, but “He.” The reference is to Christ the Head, just as the “He” in Romans 6:10 also contemplates Him. Again the tense is in the aorist and should be rendered (as Bagster’s Interlinear) “has been justified.” That the marginal “justified” is to be used rather than “freed” is clear from the fact that the Greek word occurs fifteen times in this Epistle and twenty-five times in other parts of the New Testament and excepting this verse and one other where it is translated “righteous” it is uniformly rendered “justified.” Nor should we deem such a statement strange or difficult because it is made of Christ, for to be “justified” refers not to any subjective change or work, being strictly a legal term, a judicial pronouncement, meaning to “declare righteous.” “In justification, which is a judicial and irrevocable sentence pronounced by God there are two parts: the one includes absolution from the guilt of the breach of the law: the other, the possession of that obedience to its precepts which the law demands. These being inseparable, they are both included in the expression ‘justified from sin’ ” (Robert Haldane).

“For He that died hath been justified from sin.” Those words express most forcibly the reality of Christ’s substitution for His people and testify to the completeness of their representation by Him. He died in their place and put away sin, their sin—their sin imputed to and borne by Him in the sacrifice of Himself. And assuredly He who was their Sin-bearer must be justified from sin if His death achieved its end. When the Lord Jesus Christ stood in Herod’s judgment hall and was



about to be brutally dealt with by them, when He gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked out the hair, He consoled Himself thus: “For the Lord God will help Me . . .

He is near that *justifieth Me*” (Isa. 50:6-8). We know that His expectation was realized—“God was manifest in flesh, justified in spirit” (1 Tim. 3:16). Both Pilate and the centurion who crucified Him could justify Him from man’s accusations but because He had taken our guilt and was made sin for us, so from our sin and guilt He could only be justified through the death which atoned for them. His justification could be declared by none other than the One to whom He offered Himself a propitiation. God’s raising Him from the dead demonstrated that Christ was “justified from sin.”

“Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom. 6:8). It should be clear to all who have followed closely our exposition above that the resurrection here postulated is not a subjective one as is regeneration, nor is it a promise of bodily triumph over the grave, though both of these follow as necessary *consequences*. Rather is the life here mentioned an *objective* one, something outside of ourselves. Three details are to be carefully noted. First, as the “died with Christ” is an external and legal transaction and not an inward experience, so also is the “live with Him.” Second, the plural pronoun connotes that this predication is made of all those whom Christ represented: it is a *corporate* life and not merely individual. Third, it is not a life “through” Christ, derived from Him, but by virtue of our identification and judicial oneness “with Him.” When Christ was made alive from the dead all the elect rose with Him. When the Head was “justified from sin” so were all His members (though application thereof is not made till they believe: Acts 13:39). The righteousness of Christ secures “justification *of life*” (Rom. 5:18).

It seems a pity we should now have to break off in the middle of our exposition of this most interesting and important passage, but the exhaustion of present space obliges us to do so: however we will resume (D.V.) in the following issue at the point where we here leave off. Meanwhile it is pertinent to ask, How far does this argument of the Apostle’s answer the question raised in verse 1? Does the doctrinal affirmation of the believer’s oneness with Christ in His death and resurrection effectually dispose of the practical objection that justification by grace through faith without any works of ours tends to moral laxity and encourages a course of sinning? Answer, we frankly aver that so far from such a reply satisfying the natural man, it will appear “foolishness” unto him. Yet it is far otherwise with the spiritual mind, so we hope to show in the sequel. Motives inspire the believer which have no effect upon the unbeliever. Arguments and incentives move the regenerate which do not and cannot affect the unregenerate.—A.W.P.

