

Vol. XXIV

September, 1945

No. 9

STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

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

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FAITH AS A SHIELD

A shield is a weapon of defense, held in front of the person to prevent the missiles of the foe injuring the body. A "shield" then is a means of *protection*. In Scripture, it is used as a metaphor of that which affords security against the assaults of the Devil. Varied indeed are the shields and shields which professing Christians employ. Some trust in the sufficiency of carnal reasoning to repel the attacks which Satan makes on their souls. Some shelter behind human traditions—and poor protection they give! Some seek refuge beneath the shield of fatalism, but get sorely wounded. It is indeed blessedly true that whatsoever cometh to pass was eternally foreordained by God; yet, that truth was not revealed in Scripture as a rule for us to walk by. Others attempt to hide behind an avowed inability to do anything to help themselves, though they act very differently when menaced by physical perils! Others take presumption for their shield: Heedless of warnings and reckless of dangers, they imagine themselves to be strong and proof against the attacks of Satan. Peter fell through self-confidence!

"Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked" (Eph 6:16). This is one of the seven pieces of the "armour of God," which the Christian is bidden to "take unto" himself and "put on," in order that he may be able to stand against the wiles of the Devil (Eph 6:11-17)—here likened unto "fiery darts" because his temptations are noiseless, swift, piercing, and dangerous, designed to enflame our lusts. And as we are exhorted to "resist stedfast in the faith" (1Pe 5:9), our Adversary the Devil, who "as a roaring lion walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1Pe 5:8), so here, we are told "above all, [to be] taking the shield of faith" (Eph 6:16), for that is the only effectual "shield" which will stand the soul in good stead when the Enemy launches his attack upon us. The "above all" has a double force: First, it means *over* all the other pieces of armour, serving as a protecting roof above them. The shield of the ancients was made of light but hard metal, having a loop attached to the inner side, through which the hand was thrust to secure a firm hold; and then, the shield could be raised or lowered according as need required.

The different pieces of armour represent the various spiritual graces of the Christian, and the "above all" in our text signifies, second, pre-eminently, chiefly, supremely. It is an all-important and essential thing that we should take the shield of faith. First, because it is to guard the whole man. Satan assaults the *head*, seeking to deceive with subtle error and false doctrine, or by unsettling us with doubts. Nothing but faith will enable us to retain what we have received from the Word. When Satan calls that Word in question, faith will interpose with "It is written," written by Him who "cannot lie" (Ti 1:2)—and that is an effectual shield. He assails the *heart*, seeking to get us to question the love of God in the day of adversity, or to draw out our affections world-ward in the day of prosperity; but faith declares, "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (Job 13:15), and will esteem "the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt" (Heb 11:26). Or he may direct his fiery darts at your *knees*, telling you it is vain to pray, for God will not hear you; but faith lays hold of one of the prayer promises and betakes itself to the throne of grace.

But the "above all" signifies not only that "the shield of faith" is for guarding the whole man, but also that it is essential for the preservation of our *other graces*. As Spurgeon well said in his sermon on this verse, "The man of God is to put on the girdle and the breastplate, and he is also to be shod and wear his helmet. Though these are all armour, faith is an armour for his armour; it is not only a defence for him, but a defence for his defences." In other words, unless faith be kept healthy and active, the other graces will languish and be helpless. As Charnock says, "Other graces may fail and the soul recover, but if faith failed, all would be lost." Satan will attack our sincerity by attempting to sever the girdle of truth (Eph 6:14), and only faith in exercise will preserve our sincerity. He will attack our practical righteousness or holiness, seeking to batter in "the breastplate" (Eph 6:14); and only faith will enable us to say with Joseph, "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Gen 39:9)! All the Christian graces need Divine grace to preserve them, and that grace is given in response to the exercise of faith.

"Above all, taking the shield of faith" (Eph 6:16). The faith which God has given to His child is to be *made use of*. It is to perform varied duties and is fitted to accomplish many useful ends. It is not only the instrument by which the soul feeds on God's Word, but it is also the grand defensive weapon for protecting the soul against Satan's temptations. Since the Christian's faith was imparted by God, it turns to God as its Object. Such a faith is not grounded on fancies and feelings, dreams and visions, but is based upon and built up by the Word. Faith credits the testimony of Holy Writ: It does not regard the Devil as a fiction, but

as a solemn reality; and views sin not as a trifle, but as that "abominable thing" which God hates (Jer 44:4). It does not look upon the warnings and threatenings of Scripture as mere bogies, but as danger-signals, which we disregard at our peril. And therefore, as the Psalmist declared, "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psa 91:4). If the saint be "girt about with truth" (Eph 6:14), his soul would be more secure against the fiercest assault of Satan than was the body of the knight of old who went forth into battle clad in this coat of mail.

Now, as the best of shields is of no value to the soldier in the day of battle, unless he *uses* it, so faith is of no avail to the Christian when tempted by the Devil, unless he has it in exercise. There is a sacred art in being able to handle the shield of faith, and that art consists of having God's Word stored in our hearts, and then drawing promptly upon the same in the hour of need. Let us be very simple and practical. If tempted to covetousness, I must use that Word, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth" (Mat 6:19). If solicited by evil companions, I must heed that injunction, "If sinners entice thee, consent thou not" (Pro 1:10), and that will prove an effectual shield. If the Devil seeks to enkindle anger or bitterness against a brother or sister, and I lay hold of the precept, "Be kindly affectioned one to another" (Rom 12:10), his fiery darts will be quenched. It is because the *details* of Scripture have so little place in our meditations that Satan trips us so frequently. How pertinent was the Saviour's responses to the wiles of Satan! Without modification, could He say, "By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer" (Psa 17:4).

But faith is not only to deliver from Satan's solicitations to evil, but also from his temptations to fears and frights, despondency and despair; and therefore, it must make use of the Divine *promises*, as well as precepts. There must be full confidence in God's faithfulness and power to make good His pledges. The Devil will tell you, 'Things will be so bad after the war is over, and the coffers of the government so empty, that you will starve;' but faith will repel his dart with, "My God shall supply all your need" (Phi 4:19). He may argue, 'Things will come to such a pass that no servant of Christ will be allowed to minister unto the saints;' but faith will quench that dart with the grand promise, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee" (Heb 13:5). He may answer, 'But your corruptions will prove too strong for you;' 'No,' replies faith, "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phi 1:6). 'But,' continues Satan, 'you are weak, and I shall yet destroy you!' 'No,' says faith, 'Christ gives to the feeblest of His sheep eternal life, and none shall pluck them out of His hand' (Joh 10:28-29). That is what we understand by *using* faith as a *shield*.

Some may be inclined to object unto what is said above, by pointing out that the implication throughout is that the Christian has it in his own unaided power to make use of faith whenever he pleases; whereas, in fact, he is as much dependent upon God for the motions of his faith, as he was for the original impartation of it. That is not disputed; but is it relevant? We are not discussing the Christian's ability or his inability, but rather, are pressing one phase of his accountability; and in so doing, we are but emulating the apostle. After telling the saints they were opposed by the whole of the organized forces of Satan, he bade them, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day" (Eph 6:13); and then, specified the use they were to make of each particular part of their armour. Therein, he was enforcing the Christian's responsibility, and he did not weaken—or rather, annul the same—by adding, 'though of yourselves, ye are incapable of so doing.' Not so did the Divinely-inspired teacher act!

While it is true that the Christian is wholly dependent upon God; yet, it is not true that he is wholly impotent as the non-Christian—to insist that he *is*, is to deny that regeneration has effected any radical change in him, that there is an essential difference between those who have been made new creatures in Christ, and those who are dead in trespasses and sins. If the Christian's faith be weak and sickly, the fault is entirely his own. The way to obtain more faith is to exercise that which we already have—see Luke 8:18. The best way to exercise the faith we have is to expectantly ask the Lord for an increase of it—Luke 17:5. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phi 4:13).

THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

21. Ephesians 1:15-23 – Part 7

In our last two articles, we have been occupied with the power of God as it is exercised in connection with His people. First, we have described the *excellency* of the same—"the exceeding greatness of his power" (Eph 1:19); and then follows a brief declaration that it is "to us-ward"—which comprehends in general terms *all* its operations upon, within, and unto the saints. Second, there is a magnifying of its *efficiency*: "Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power" (Eph 1:19). Briefly, that includes two things: The quickening of the soul; and the communication of the principle of faith as a Divine gift. One who is spiritually dead cannot spiritually believe. The natural man is able to believe the Scriptures in a natural or mental way (as he believes authenticated human history), but he cannot savingly believe the Gospel, until he is born again (Joh 1:12, 13; 3:3, 5). And for those things, we need to pray for a better apprehension: "That we may *know* him that is true" (1Jo 5:20). And now, third, we are to consider how that mighty power of God operated in connection with our Saviour.

"Who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19-20). In our examination and contemplation of these words, four questions will supply our focal points. First, what was there in connection with the raising of Christ, which called for the putting forth of "the working of his mighty power"? Second, why is God's raising of Christ made the unit or standard of measurement of the power which He exerts in those "who believe"? Third, what is the precise nature of the power which God then exercised? Was it simply His omnipotence or something in addition thereto? Was it merely physical power?—if not, what? Fourth, what are the principal points of analogy between God's raising of Christ from the dead and His bringing us to "believe"? While quite distinct, these questions overlap at certain points, so while attempting to supply answers to all of them, we shall not confine ourselves to a strict observance of their order. Perhaps the reader would find it interesting to think out his own answers before proceeding further.

Ephesians 1 is not the only passage which directly associates the Divine power with the raising of Christ from the dead. In Romans 1:3-4, we are told that our Lord Jesus Christ was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Of all the wondrous works which God did for Christ—in the miracle of His incarnation, in preserving Him as an infant from the malice of Herod, in anointing Him with the Holy Spirit—this bringing of Him forth from the tomb is singled out for particular mention. Christ had presented Himself to Israel as their Messiah and had affirmed, "I and my Father are one" (Joh 10:30). Had His claims been false, the grave would have retained Him. By raising Him from the dead by His power, God set His seal upon all Christ's teaching and demonstrated He was indeed "the Son of God." Again, we read that "though he was crucified through weakness [for He made no effort to resist His enemies and deliver Himself out of their hands], yet he liveth by the power of God" (2Co 13:4). In other passages, we learn that Christ rose again by His *own* power, but that is not the side of the Truth which is now before us.

The first question we are here to consider is, What was there particularly in connection with the raising of Christ from the dead which made manifest God's "mighty power" (Eph 1:19)?—far more so than the future raising of the whole human race will. It should be obvious that the first answer must be: since the death which Christ died was no ordinary one, then His resurrection must be an extra-ordinary one. Here, we enter the realm of profoundest mystery, and only as our thoughts are formed by the clear teaching of Scripture can we, in any measure, enter into its meaning. God made Christ to be sin for His people when He laid upon Him the iniquities of them all. Consequently, He was "made a cure" and was required to receive the awful wages of sin, which involved much more than the dissolution of soul and body. Christ not only died, but was committed to the grave. "Christ being raised from the dead dieth no more; death hath no more *dominion* over him" (Rom 6:9), which clearly implies that during those three days, He was under death's power, He was death's prisoner, He was death's "lawful captive" (Isa 49:24), held fast in his terrible grip.

"Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that he should be holden of it" (Act 2:24). Here is New Testament proof that Christ was held by death and that God "loosed" Him from something in order to His resurrection. There is such a fullness to the words of Scripture that, often, no single definition can bring out their meaning. Such is the case here. The "pains of death" refer to what Christ endured upon the cross—not only, and not primarily, the bodily pains of natural death

(acute and many though they were), but the soul anguish of spiritual death. "If Christ had merely died a corporal death, no end would have been accomplished by it: it was requisite also that He should feel the smart of the Divine vengeance in order to appease the wrath of God and satisfy His justice. Hence, it was necessary for Him to contend with the power of hell and the horror of eternal death" (J. Calvin). The pains of *that* "death" came upon Him when He exclaimed, "Now is my soul troubled" (Joh 12:27), increased in their intensity in Gethsemane, and were experienced in their fullness during the three hours of darkness when God then "loosed" them, so that He experienced a resurrection of soul.

The Greek word for "pains" in Acts 2:24 is rendered "*travail* upon a woman with child" in 1 Thessalonians 5:3—literally, it means "the birth-throes of death." Light is cast on that almost paradoxical expression by Isaiah 53:11, where it was fore-announced that the Saviour should "see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied." Before His Church could be vitally brought forth, Christ had to endure in His soul the pangs of labour, and He *died* under the same spiritually, when He was separated from God—though three hours later, He was "loosed" therefrom. Those words, "the pains of death" are a quotation of a Messianic utterance in Psalm 18:5: "The *sorrows* [cords] of hell compassed me about," which, under another metaphor, brings out a *different* aspect of Christ's death, namely, that of one imprisoned and bound—compare Matthew 5:25-26 for the same figure. As our Surety, Christ was arrested by Divine justice and could not be discharged till He had paid our debt to the uttermost farthing. His "it is finished" (Joh 19:30) announced that full payment had been made; yet, His body was not "loosed" from the grave till three days later—compare "He was taken from prison" (Isa 53:8).

The *two* things are distinguished again in Christ's declaration, "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [rather was it "loosed" and went to Paradise]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa 16:10). Christ not only died, but was "buried," and for three days remained in the *death state*. Hence, God raised Him not merely from death, but "from the dead," from the state of death. Had He "revived" or quickened Him immediately after His expiring on the cross, that would have been raising Him from "death," but not "from the dead." Christ gained a victory not only over death, but also over the grave—note they are distinguished in "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" (1Co 15:55)! That is what explains "he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption" (Act 13:34)—i.e. the death state. Christ entered the state or place of corruption; namely, the grave, but "as His body was free from sickness while He lived, so it was free from corruption when He died" (Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1680).

We believe, then, that there is a threefold *double* allusion in Acts 2:24: First, that the "death" from whose pains and cords God loosed Christ was the second death, which He "tasted" (Heb 2:9), and physical dissolution. Second, that He was "loosed" from the pangs of the former at the close of the three hours darkness, for His "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit" (Luk 23:46) evinces that He was again in communion with Him; and of the latter, when He came forth from the sepulcher. Third, that the Greek word in Acts 2:24 is rightly rendered "pains" or travail-throes, whereas the Hebrew word of Psalm 18:5 signifies "cords"—a clear hint of a *double* line of truth here—bringing in the idea of one held in prison. It "was not possible that He should be holden" (Act 2:24) of death, because the Divine veracity was involved (God had announced His resurrection), because His covenant-faithfulness was at stake, because the basic principle of His government ("them that honour me I will honour," 1Sa 2:30) required Christ should be raised, and because the Law demanded He should receive its award.

Now, as it was God who delivered up Christ to death for our offences (Act 2:23, Rom 4:24)—not only physical death, but the whole of what is included in "the wages of sin" (Rom 6:23)—so He alone could deliver Him from that death, and subsequently, from the prison-house of the grave. Personally, we believe that God also then delivered Christ from *the powers of darkness*. On this point, Scripture is not very explicit, yet we consider it is quite implicit. We know of no writer who has attempted to deal with this point—an admittedly mysterious one—and therefore, we would be doubly cautious, and inform the reader that what we now advance is in no spirit of dogmatism, but is submitted to his careful judgment. First, from the law of analogy, does it not seem highly probable that Satan would make every possible effort *to prevent* the resurrection of Christ? Very shortly after His birth, the Devil stirred up Herod to slay Him (Rev 12:4), and should we not regard the second temptation (Mat 4:5, 6) as another desperate move in the same direction? We do know he put it into the heart of Judas to betray Him (Joh 13:2).

Second, when arrested in the Garden, Christ said to His enemies, "this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luk 22:53)—for how long was that "hour" protracted? If Revelation 12:4 warrants the conclu-

sion that the Devil prompted Herod to slay Him as a child, may we not fairly infer that he inspired the chief priests and Pharisees to say to Pilate, "Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure" (Mat 27:64), so that a heavy stone was placed over its mouth, the stone "sealed" and "a watch" of soldiers set to guard it? Third, does not "having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it" (Col 2:15) clearly imply a concerted effort on the part of the powers of evil to *oppose* His resurrection and ascension—how else did He triumph "over them"? Why was "the King of glory," on His entrance into Heaven, greeted as "The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty *in battle*" (Psa 24:7-8)—is not the likely reference to His victory over the internal forces? Psalm 68:18 seems to supply confirmation.

Finally, does not *the analogy* here drawn with our conversion necessitate this conclusion? We are here stated to "believe, *according* to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:19-20). Now, we know beyond any room for doubt that the mighty power of God in bringing us to savingly believe is concerned, in considerable part, in delivering us from the bondage of Satan—see Acts 26:18, Colossians 1:13, Hebrews 2:14, 15. If then Satan sought to hold us forever, but was foiled by the Divine omnipotence, and if there be an accurate and perfect parallel between that aspect of our conversion and what God wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, then must we not conclude that Satan also sought to forever hold Christ fast in the grave, but that God defeated Him and triumphed over all his resistance? There is no doubt at all in our own mind on the matter.

We turn now to consider why God's raising of Christ from the dead is made the unit or standard of measurement of the power which He exercises in those "who believe." It is both the pattern and pledge of what God can and will do for His people. In the Old Testament, the standard miracle was the deliverance of Israel from Egypt—again and again, appeal was made to the Red Sea as the supreme demonstration of God's power to help and to save. When the prophets sought to inspire courage and confidence, they pointed back to that mighty deliverance (Isa 43:16-18; 51:9, 10), and when God renewed His promise to Israel, He took them back to the same spot and said, "According to the days of thy coming out of the land of Egypt will I shew unto him marvellous things" (Mic 7:15). But in the New Testament, the Red Sea is superseded by the empty tomb, and the resurrection of Christ from the dead is pointed to as the grand triumph of omnipotence and the standard of what God will do for us "who believe."

What comfort should this impart! What holy confidence should it inspire in the hearts of believers—that the mighty power of God is engaged to act for them! That the same power which wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead operates both toward and in them. It is a power which is beyond resistance: "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Rom 8:31). It is a power which is superior to and triumphs over all our weakness: "Now unto him that is able to keep you" (Jude :24). It is a power all-sufficient to supply our every need—when the Saviour taught us to pray for our daily sustenance, deliverance from evil, the forgiveness of our sins, what arguments did He bid us use?—"For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory" (Mat 6:13). It is a power which will do for us "exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think" (Eph 3:20). How thankful we should be that this is so. How constantly we should look to and depend upon that power. How it should strengthen our faith to know that the One who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus will yet make us "perfect in every good work to do his will" (Heb 13:20-21).

Let us now endeavour to supply answer to the question, "What is the precise nature of the "power" which God exerted in the raising of Christ and in the bringing of us to savingly believe? Was it simply His omnipotence, or something in addition thereto? Was it merely physical power?—if not, what? By "physical power," we mean the might of God operating in the material realm, producing physical effects. Now, if we keep in mind the nature of Christ's death as a satisfaction for sin, it should be quite obvious that more was involved in the raising of Him from the dead than there will be in the destruction of this earth and the creating of a new one. It may not be easy to find terms suited to express what we have in mind—still less, to convey the idea intelligently to our readers—yet, we will make the attempt. When Christ cleansed the leper, opened the ears of the deaf, and gave sight to the blind, there was an exercise of omnipotence. There was the same, too, when God raised Christ from the dead—but there was something more.

"Persons often misunderstand the meaning of power as put forth by God, and conclude because He is almighty in power, He can therefore do one thing as easily as another. But they do not see that infinite power in God is but one of His glorious perfections. He is infinite also in holiness, in justice, in wisdom, in

knowledge, etc. The question, therefore, is not what God *can* do, but what God *will* do—and thus, His power, not His absolute power, but His power working in harmony with all His other perfections, is to be taken into consideration. There is, therefore, what we may call God's moral power; that is, His power as working with and co-ordinate to all His other perfections, as well as His almighty power. Now, to raise Christ from the dead was the act of God's *moral* power, as well as His omnipotent power. There were no circumstances attending the death of Lazarus which drew upon the depths of infinite justice, infinite holiness, infinite wisdom, as well as infinite grace, mercy, and love" (J.C. Philpot). That statement points in the right direction; yet, it scarcely goes far enough.

The death of Christ was a legal transaction; and therefore, the *legal element* entered into His resurrection. His death was an enduring of the full penalty of the Law, inflicted by the Judge of all. It was endured "the just for the unjust" (1Pe 3:18), the holy Surety receiving the awful wages due those He represented. And it was endured with fullest confidence as to the blessed issue therefrom. When Christ had magnified the law by serving and suffering, doing and dying, He "committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1Pe 2:23), declaring "I know that I shall not be ashamed. He is near that justifieth me" (Isa 50:7-8). And God's raising of Him from the dead was His *answer* to the dying appeal of the One who had been cast out by the world. It was God's response to the Saviour's trust in Himself. It was God acting as the Divine Umpire in the controversy between His own Anointed, and the world which had disowned Him—God reversing their erroneous verdict and exonerating the One who endured their malice to the extreme limit.

Righteousness required that God should raise Christ from the dead. The Law demanded that He who had so illustriously honoured it should enter into its award. Holiness insisted that the sinless One should be released from the grave. By raising Him from the dead, God openly declared that all Christ taught was true, set His seal upon the triumphant ending of His stupendous mission, and attested His acceptance of the satisfaction, which He had made for His people. To create originally displayed the "eternal power and Godhead" (Rom 1:20), but what we are now considering did more than that: "Christ was raised up from the dead by the *glory* of the Father" (Rom 6:4). Christ was raised not simply as a private person, but as the Head of His people—the Church rose in and with Him: Ephesians 2:5, 6, Colossians 3:1. To create was an act of power, but to bring forth a new creation out of the wrecked and ruined old creation was glorious power, a moral triumph. It was glorious power which transformed a curse into never-ending blessing.

Christ was "made a curse for us" (Gal 3:13), yet God "hast made him most blessed for ever" (Psa 21:6). Down to the grave itself, the power which prevails over man (and prevailed over the Son of man) is that of *death*. It is thus that the universal empire of sin has been attested—"Sin reigned in death," as the Greek of Romans 5:21 may be rendered. But resurrection makes manifest the more excellent power of *righteousness* by the triumphant re-entering of the once-slain Just One into life, and it is with His liberty that His people are freed. Hence, the verse which declares, "That as sin hath reigned unto [or "in"] death" (Rom 5:21), concludes by saying, "even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus, our answer to the third question is, 'Not only the bare omnipotence of God, but the power and glory of His righteousness, or His righteous power.' That very expression is found substantially in His promise to the trembling saints: "Fear thou not;...I will uphold thee with *the right hand* of my *righteousness*" (Isa 41:10).

What are the principal points of analogy between God's raising Christ from the dead, and His operations in and unto those "who believe" (Eph 1:19)? Ere answering that question, let it be pointed out that the resurrection of Christ was not only the pattern of ours, but also both the pledge and procuring cause thereof—for He "was raised again for *our* justification" (Rom 4:24-25). The resurrection of Christ was necessary not only to evince God's acceptance of His satisfaction on our behalf, but as a necessary step to secure the application of the merits of His sacrifice to us, to communicate "the sure mercies of David" (Act 13:34) unto us. "Because I live" said He, "ye shall live also" (Joh 14:19); otherwise, He would be a Bridegroom without a Bride, a Redeemer with no redeemed, the living Head of a lifeless body. God's raising of Christ from the dead was the pledge He would quicken into newness of life all for whom He died. The Corn of wheat which died "bringeth forth much fruit" (Joh 12:24).

The margin of Isaiah 53:9 tells us that Christ was "with the wicked, and with the rich in his *deaths*," for in His soul, He tasted of the second death; and in His body, He suffered natural death—thus, He experienced both a spiritual and natural resurrection. So, too, do His people: The former at their regeneration; the second, at Christ's return. As Christ was delivered from penal death by the righteousness of God, so, too, are all who believe (Rom 1:16, 17). As Christ was delivered from the forces of Satan, so are we from "the

power of darkness” (Col 1:13). As Christ has been made “after the power of an endless life” (Heb 7:16), so we shall “not perish, but have everlasting life” (Joh 3:16). As Christ was raised to honour and glory, so shall we be. Even now, are we the sons of God, but it is not yet made manifest what we shall be: “But we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be *like him*; for we shall see him as he is” (1Jo 3:2). Hallelujah!

SPIRITUAL GROWTH OR CHRISTIAN PROGRESS

9c. Its Means

4. *Occupation with Christ.* Clearly, this comes next. We must have the Scriptures before we can have Christ, for they are they which testify of Him (Joh 5:39)—where the Bible has not gone, Christ is unknown. But in the Scriptures, He is fully revealed: In the volume of the Book, it is written of Him. In Him, all its precepts are perfectly fulfilled. In Him, all its promises are certified (2Co 1:20). In Him, all its prophecies culminate, for “testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Rev 19:10). Divorce doctrine from Christ, and it is indeed “dry.” Separate precepts from Christ, and we have no perfect exemplification of them. Sever the promises from Christ and they are no longer “Yea and Amen.” Part asunder the prophecies from Christ, and they are of no profit to the soul, but rather enigmas for useless speculation. Christ is the Alpha and Omega of the written Word: “Jesus Christ” is the first name mentioned in the New Testament (Mat 1:1), and the last (Rev 22:21), and the Old Testament is filled with foreshadowings and forecasts of Him.

If the Christian desires the milk of the Word that he may grow thereby, it is that he “may grow up *into him* in all things, which is the head, even Christ” (Eph 4:15). It is unto the image of God’s Son that the saint is predestinated to be conformed. It is upon Christ, now seated at God’s right hand, that he is to steadfastly set his affection (Col 3:1-2). It is with his eyes fixed upon Christ that he is to run the race which is set before him (Heb 12:1-2). It is of Christ he is to learn (Mat 11:29), for His fullness he is to receive (Joh 1:16), by His commandments be directed (Joh 14:15). It is on Christ he is to feed, as Israel did on the manna in the wilderness (Joh 6:31, 49, 58). It is unto Christ he is to go in all his troubles (Mat 14:12), for He is a High Priest who can be touched with the feeling of our infirmities. It is for the honour and glory of Christ he is ever to aim (Phi 1:20). In short, the Christian is so to act that he can say, “For to me to live is *Christ*” (Phi 1:21).

Now, in order to have fellowship with another, there must be three things: That other must be known, he must be present, and I must have a free and familiar access to him. Thus, it is with the soul and Christ. First, I must be personally acquainted with Him: He must be a living reality to my soul. Therefore, it follows that if I am to have close fellowship with Him, I must become better acquainted with Him; and in proportion as I do so, such will be my true progress. We agree with Pierce that the words “grow in grace” are explained (in part, at least) by the clause, which immediately follows: “...and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ” (2Pe 3:18)—for the second verse of that epistle tells us that grace and peace are multiplied unto us “*through* the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord” (2Pe 1:2). One of the chief things which retards the Christian—which renders him weak in faith and causes his graces to languish—is his failure to increase in the knowledge of his Lord and Saviour, and thereby attain unto a deeper and more intimate acquaintance with Him. How can we fully trust, or set our affections upon, One who is well nigh a stranger to us?

Though the Christian believes in an *unseen* Christ, he does not—he could not—trust in an *unknown* Christ. No, his testimony is “I know whom I have believed” (2Ti 1:12), which does not mean I know Him because I have believed; but rather, I believed in Him because He stood revealed to my heart. Take the experience of the one who penned those words. There was a time when Paul was ignorant of Christ. Before his conversion, the apostle knew Him not; and consequently, he then had no faith in Him, no love for Him, no pantings after Him. And it is thus with all before regeneration: They knew not the things which belong to their everlasting peace. Paul was a great scholar, a strict moralist, a devout religionist; yet, he was completely ignorant of the Lord Jesus Christ, whom to know, is life eternal. He was trained by Gamaliel, the famous teacher of that day, was deeply versed in the contents of the Old Testament, and had listened to the sermon of dying Stephen; and yet, was a total stranger to the Christ of God. Nor did his theological training, philosophic mind, or acquaintance with the Scriptures lead him to a saving knowledge of Christ.

All that Paul knew of Christ was by teaching from Above. It was God who enlightened his mind with a saving knowledge of the Truth and who drew his heart unto the Lord Jesus by His own invincible grace and love. And thus, it is with each one whom the Lord God omnipotent calleth. Every person in his natural state is altogether ignorant of the true God and is an utter stranger to the alone and all-sufficient Mediator, the righteous Redeemer, who is mighty to save. And *how* are they brought into an acquaintance with Him? It is

wholly of grace, and through the supernatural operations of the Holy Spirit upon their souls. As the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, He is pleased to quicken the soul with spiritual life and to illumine the mind with a knowledge of Divine Truth, imparting an inward spiritual perception of Christ to the heart thereby. The outward revelation of Christ unto us is in the written Word, which sets Him forth and testifies of Him, in which He is clearly, freely, and fully exhibited. But that external revelation has no saving effect upon us until the Holy Spirit shines upon our blind minds, removes the veil which is over our hearts (2Co 3:14, 16), and opens our understandings that we might understand the Scriptures (Luk 24:45) and what is written therein concerning Christ.

It is only as the soul is regenerated that it is capacitated to take in spiritual views of the person, office, and work of Christ, to obtain a real and satisfying knowledge of His Godhood and Manhood, the purpose and design of the Father in His miraculous incarnation, life, obedience, death, and resurrection. It is the great office and work of the Holy Spirit to “testify” of the Son (Joh 15:26), to “glorify” Him (Joh 16:14), to take of the things of Christ and “shew it unto” those for whom He died (Joh 16:15), to make Him known unto the hearts of poor sinners. He does this in and by the Word, after He has fitted the soul to receive it. Hence, the apostle said, “And we know that the Son of God is come” (1Jo 5:20). How did John and those to whom he wrote “know” that? His next words tell us: “...and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true.” A spiritual understanding, which is the gift of God, is a principal part of the Holy Spirit’s work in regeneration, and it is by that spiritual understanding, the quickened soul is enabled to receive from the Word a spiritual and supernatural knowledge of Christ, just as it is by means of the eye—and that alone—we can see and admire the glorious shining of the sun.

If it be asked: ‘What are those sights which the Holy Spirit gives us, whereby He begets faith in the heart, or whereby He makes a discovery of Christ unto the soul?’ The answer is: ‘The Spirit gives us no other views of Christ than what are in exact accordance with the revelation made of Him in the Scriptures of Truth.’ But more specifically: The first discovery which the Spirit makes of Christ to the poor sinner is as a fully-suited and all-sufficient Saviour, whose person and perfections are eternal and infinite, who was born into this world and called Jesus that should “save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). He makes known to the soul the wondrous love and amazing grace of Christ, His robe of righteousness, His efficacious blood which was shed for those deserving of naught but Hell. He thereby takes of the things of Christ and makes such a discovery of them that the soul is captivated, the will captured, and the heart won to Him; and thereby, the sinner is led to believe in His person, surrender to His scepter, and rest on His finished work. The Spirit enlightens the understanding, brings the will to choose Him as his absolute Lord, his heart to love Him, and his conscience to be satisfied with His sacrifice, and his whole being yields to be governed and guided by Him.

Thus, Christ is revealed in the hearts of His people (Gal 1:16) as their one hope of eternal glory. The Word of God is the sole rule and ground of their faith. Christ is exhibited therein as the immediate Object of it, and as the Spirit takes of the things of Him and reveals them to the renewed soul, He draws forth its acts upon Christ as He is made known; and thereby, He becomes real and precious to the soul; thereby, the heart is brought into the enjoyment of His love, to delight in His perfections, to behold Him as “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). As Christ is made the Object of faith, faith is a spiritual perception of Him; and thereby, He has become a living and present Reality. As the heart is engaged with Him, as the thoughts are exercised upon His person, His titles, His offices, His perfections, His work, the soul exclaims, “My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD” (Psa 104:34). Believers love not an unknown Christ, nor do they trust in One with whom they are unacquainted. Though unseen by the natural eye, when faith is in exercise that one can say, “I know that my redeemer liveth” (Job 19:25).

Now, it is from this personal, inward and spiritual knowledge of Christ, received from the Word, as taught by the Spirit, that faith in Christ takes its rise, and love to Him springs therefrom as its proper case. But all believers do not possess an equally clear and full knowledge of Christ. To some, He is more fully revealed, whilst others have a vaguer view and lesser apprehension of Him, which constitutes the difference between a strong and a weak Christian. The weak believer knows but little of Christ; and therefore, does not trust or delight in Him so much as does a stronger one, for the latter differs from him in that he is led into a closer and fuller acquaintance with the Saviour. That may be accounted for both from the Divine side of things and from the human. As we cannot see the sun but in its own light, so neither can we see the Sun of righteousness, but in His light (Psa 36:9). As we cannot see temporal things and objects without light, so

faith cannot see Christ but as the Holy Spirit shines upon and enlightens it. Nevertheless, Christ is not capricious in His shining, nor is the Spirit arbitrary in His illumination.

Christ has declared, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: . . . and I will love him, and will *manifest myself* to him" (Joh 14:21). But if the Christian yields to a spirit of self-pleasing, and for a season keeps not the commands of his Lord, then such precious manifestations of Him to his soul will be withheld. It is the office and work of the Spirit to take of the things of Christ, and show them to the renewed; but if the believer disregards that injunction, "grieve not the holy Spirit of God" (Eph 4:30), and allows things in his life which are displeasing to Him, so far from regaling him with fresh views of Christ, He will withhold His cordials and comforts, and make him wretched, until he is convicted of his backsliding and brought to full confession thereof. On the one hand, the Christian who is favoured with a deeper knowledge and clearer acquaintance with Christ frankly disavows any personal credit and freely ascribes his blessings wholly unto distinguishing grace; but on the other hand, the Christian who makes little progress in the school of Christ and enjoys but little intimate fellowship with Him, must take the entire blame to himself—a distinction which ever needs to be borne in mind.

Concerning Israel of old and the supply of food which God gave them in the wilderness, it is recorded "and gathered, some more, some less" (Exo 16:17). The manna (type of Christ) was freely given, made accessible to all alike: If then some were more indolent to appropriate as goodly a portion as others, they had only themselves to blame. So it is with the saint and Christ. We are instructed to pray that we may be "increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col 1:10), but if we are negligent to do so—or offer the petition only halfheartedly—we shall have not. We are assured, "Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD" (Hos 6:3). The Hebrews word for "follow on" signifies "persevere," "follow after." It is a forceful word, connoting earnestness and diligence. The way and means are there described: We must highly value and steadfastly endeavour after the same, making it our principal quest (*see* Pro 2:1-4, Phi 3:12-15!); and then, if we perform the prescribed duty, we may certainly expect the promised blessing. But if we be lethargic and rest on our oars, no progress is made, and the fault is entirely ours.

Since the believer owes his salvation unto Christ and is to spend eternity with Him, surely, he should make it his chief business and absorbing concern to obtain a clearer and better knowledge of Him. No other knowledge is so important, so blessed, so satisfying. We do not mean a bare, theoretical, speculative and uninfluential knowledge of Him—but a supernatural, spiritual, believing and transforming one. Said the apostle, "I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phi 3:8). Observe how *comprehensive* is this knowledge: "Christ, Jesus, Lord"—comprising the principal aspects in which He is set forth in the Word. "Christ" respecting His person and office; "Jesus," His work and salvation; "Lord," His dominion and rule over us. Note, too, it is an *appropriating* knowledge: "Christ Jesus *my* Lord" (Phi 3:8)—to apprehend Him as Mine, on good grounds, is the excellency of this knowledge. The demons know Him as Prophet, Priest and King, but they apprehend Him not with personal appropriation to themselves. But this knowledge enables its possessor to say, "Who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

This spiritual and saving knowledge of Christ is an *effectual* one. As Hebrews 6:9 speaks of "things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak," so there are things which accompany this knowledge. "They that know thy name [the Lord as revealed] *will* put their trust in thee" (Psa 9:10)—it cannot be otherwise, and the better they know Him, the firmer and fuller will be their trust. "Every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life" (Joh 6:40) The more we study and meditate upon the glorious person of Christ and His perfect salvation, the more we realise the everlasting sufficiency of His life and death to save us from all our sins and miseries, the more will faith be fed and spiritual graces nourished. So, too, the more will our hearts be enflamed and our affections drawn out to Him. It must be so, for faith "worketh by *love*" (Gal 5:6). The more Christ is trusted, the more He is endeared to the soul. The more we live in sights and views of all He has done for us, of all His office relations to us, the more glorious will He be in our esteem. It is a spiritual view of Christ by faith which removes guilt from the conscience, produces a sense of peace and joy in the heart, and enables the soul to say, "My beloved is mine, and I am his" (Song 2:16).

As this knowledge is accompanied by faith and love, so also is it with *obedience*. "And hereby we do know that we know him, if we keep his commandments" (1Jo 2:3)—we *know* no more than we practice! "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, *so* walk ye in him" (Col 2:6)—submitting to His authority, believing His Gospel, leaning on His arm, counting on His faithfulness, looking to Him for

everything. To “walk...in him” means to act in practical union with Him. The “walk” is to be regulated by His revealed will, to tread the path He has appointed for us. To submit to His will is the only true liberty, as it is the secret of solid peace and joy. To take His yoke upon us and learn of Him ensures genuine rest of soul. But as we only enjoy the good of Christ’s promises as they are received by faith (appropriated unto myself and relied upon), so with His precepts—they must be personally taken unto myself and submitted unto. Hence, we read of “obedience to the faith” (Rom 16:26). So, too, they can only be performed by *affection*: “If ye love me, keep my commandments” (Joh 14:15).

In order to commune with Christ, there must be a spiritual knowledge of Him and an *acting faith upon Him*. Said the one who most perfectly exemplified the Christian character, “The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Gal 2:20). Christ was his all-absorbing Object, the Object of his faith and love. Christ was the One who had won his heart, whom he longed to please and honour, whose name and fame he sought to spread abroad, whose example he endeavored to follow. It was upon Him he fed by faith, and unto Him he lived in all his actions. It was from Him he had received his spiritual life, and it was to glorify Him that he desired to spend and be spent. All our fellowship with Christ is by faith. It is faith which makes Him real—“seeing him who is invisible” (Heb 11:27). It is faith which makes Him present: “Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad” (Joh 8:56). It is faith which enables us to prefer Him above all things and to say, “There is none upon earth that I desire beside thee” (Psa 73:25).

“And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace” (Joh 1:16). The “we” are those spoken of in verses 12-13. In verse 14, “full of grace and truth” (Joh 1:14) has reference to His own personal perfections, but in verse 16, it is His mediatorial fulness which God has given Him for His people to draw upon. The word “fulness” is sometimes used for abundance, as in “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof” (Psa 24:1), but as one of the Puritans pointed out, that is too narrow for its meaning here. In Christ, there is not only a fulness of abundance, but of redundancy—an overflowing fulness of grace. There is a communication of this fullness of Christ unto all believers, and they have it in a way of “receiving”—compare Romans 5:11, Galatians 3:2 and 4:5. That which believers receive from Christ is here said to be “grace for grace,” by which is meant grace answerable to grace—as “an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth” (Mat 5:38) signifies an eye answerable to an eye. Whatever grace or holiness there is in Jesus Christ, there is something in the saint answerable thereto—there is the same Spirit in the Christian as in Christ.

There is in Christ, as the God-man mediator, a “fulness...[of] grace” which is available for His people. There is laid up in Him, as in a vast storehouse, all that the believer needs for time and eternity. Of that fullness, they have received regenerating grace, justifying grace, reconciling grace; from that fullness, they may receive sanctifying grace, reconciling grace; from that fullness, they may receive sanctifying grace, preserving grace, fruit-bearing grace. It is available for *faith* to *draw upon*—all that is required is that we expectantly bring our empty vessels to be filled by Him. There is a fullness of grace in Christ which infinitely exceeds our fulness of sin and want, and from it, we are freely invited to draw. “Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37). Those words are *not* to be limited to the sinner’s first coming to Christ, nor is the “thirst” to be understood in any restricted sense. If the believer thirsts for spiritual wisdom, for purity, for meekness, for any spiritual grace, then let him come unto the Fountain of grace and “drink”; for what is drinking but “receiving”—our emptiness ministered unto by His fulness.

When poor Martha—weighed down by her “much serving”—fretfully asked the Saviour to chide her sister, He answered, “But one thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her” (Luk 10:40-42). What was that “good part” which she had chosen? This, she “sat at Jesus’ feet, and heard his word (Luk 10:39). Mary had a felt sense of her need, and she knew where that need could be supplied: She came to receive out of Christ’s fulness. And He declared that *that* is the “one thing...needful,” for it includes everything else. Put yourself in that posture of soul, that expectation of faith, whereby you can receive from Him. To be occupied with Christ was “that good part,” which would never be taken from her. But in this restless age, “sitting at the feet of Jesus” (Luk 8:35) is a lost art. Instead of humbly recognising their *own* deep need of being ministered unto, puffed up with a sense of their importance and actuated by the energy of the flesh, they are “cumbered with much *servicing*”—looking after the vineyards of others, but neglecting their own (Song 1:6).

If the Christian is to make real progress, he must needs be more occupied with Christ. As He is the sum and substance of all evangelical truth, then an increasing acquaintance with His person, offices, and work cannot but nourish the soul and promote spiritual growth. Yet, there must be constantly renewed acts of faith upon Him, if we are to draw from His fulness and be more conformed to His image. The more our affections be set upon Him, the lighter shall we hold the things of this world, and the less will carnal pleasures appeal to us. The more we spiritually meditate upon His humiliations and sufferings, the more will the soul learn to loathe sin, and the more shall we esteem our heaviest afflictions but "light" (2Co 4:17). Christ is exactly suited to our every case and Divinely qualified to supply our every need. Look less within and more unto Him. He is the only One who can do you good. Abhor everything which competes with Him in your affections. Be not satisfied with any knowledge of Christ, which does not make you more in love with Him and conform you more to His holy image.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

1. Introduction

“I am fearfully and *wonderfully* made: marvellous are thy works” (Psa 139:14). The reference there is to the physical body of man, which is the product of Omniscience. “Thy testimonies are *wonderful*: therefore doth my soul keep [treasure and submit to] them” (Psa 119:129). The Maker of man’s body is the Author of the Word, and each is alike “wonderful,” evidencing its Divine source. The human body is made up of two halves: Two arms and legs, two eyes and ears, two lungs and kidneys, etc.; so also the Word is made up of the two Testaments. Each is a living organism—a single and complete entity, yet with many members. Each of those members is necessary to give completeness to the others, and cutting off of one results in mutilation to the whole. Each of those members has its own function to fulfil, and each book in the Scriptures makes its own separate contribution to the sum of Divine revelation. As each physical member is fitted for discharging its own distinctive office, so the substance of each book in the Bible is suited to its own special theme. As there is a real difference between both the texture and purpose of the eye and the ear, so there is between the contents and leading subjects of any two books in the Word.

The analogies drawn between the living and physical body of man and the living and holy Word of God might be considerably extended. The design and functions of some members of our bodies are self-evident even to the layman. But there are others which are understood only by a trained physician. In like manner, the purpose and purport of some of the books of the Bible is more or less apparent to the rank and file of God’s people, but the special character and distinctive features of others is discerned only by the Spirit-qualified teacher. That particular parallel may be extended still further: As there are certain glands of the body which still puzzle anatomists, so there are some books of Scripture the theme of which is by no means certain to the most diligent student. After all the centuries that have passed and all the attention that has been devoted to the human body and the Divine Word, there yet remains an element of mystery about the one and the other, and only the blatant or the ignorant will deny it.

Now, it should be evident that in approaching the study of one of the books of Scripture, it must be of considerable help to the student if he can ascertain what is its main design, and what is its outstanding topic. As we pointed out in these pages over twenty years ago, in our Introduction to Exodus (now out of print), each book in the Bible was a prominent and dominant theme—which, as such, is peculiar to itself, around which everything is made to centre, and of which all the details are but the amplification. What that leading subject may be, we should make it our business to prayerfully and diligently ascertain. This can best be discovered by reading and re-reading the book under review, noting carefully any particular feature or expression which occurs frequently in it—such as “under the sun” in Ecclesiastes or “the righteousness of God” in Romans. If other students before us have published the results of their labours, it is our bounden duty to closely examine their findings in the light of Holy Writ, and either verify or disprove. Before pointing out the peculiar character and dominant subject of Joshua, let us briefly state that of the books preceding.

Genesis is obviously the book of *beginnings*. Considered historically, there is a three-fold beginning recorded: Of the heavens and the earth, of the post-diluvian world, of the nation of Israel—in the call of Abram. Viewed doctrinally, it illustrates, as might be expected, the foundation-truth of *election*, for our salvation began in God’s eternal purpose. Thus, we see here that Noah (alone of the antediluvians) “found grace in the eyes of the LORD” (Gen 6:8), and that Shem (rather than Japheth or Ham) was the one selected to be the channel through which should ultimately issue the Saviour (Gen 9:26). Here, we see God singling out Abram to be the father of the chosen Nation. Here, we see God choosing Isaac and passing by Ishmael, loving Jacob but hating Esau. Here, we behold God appointing Joseph from the twelve sons of Jacob to be the honoured instrument of saving them all from the famine. The same principle appears again in the passing by of Joseph’s older son and bestowing the portion of the firstborn upon Ephraim (48:13-20). “God hath from *the beginning* chosen you to salvation” (2Th 2:13).

Historically, the book of Exodus treats of the deliverance and departure of the Hebrews out of Egypt, but doctrinally, its theme is clearly that of *redemption*. That is just what the spiritual mind would expect, for it is by means of the redemptive work of Christ that the Father’s eternal purpose is made good. If the first book of the Bible reveals a sovereign God passing by some and choosing others to salvation, Exodus makes known how that salvation is accomplished; namely, by the mighty power of God and through the

blood of the Lamb. Moses was bidden to say unto the children of Israel, "I am the LORD, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians, and I will rid you out of their bondage, and I will *redeem* you with a stretched out arm, and with great judgments" (Exo 6:6)—the first clause showing what redemption is from; and the last, how it is effected. At the Red Sea, they sang, "Thou in thy mercy hast led forth the people which thou hast *redeemed*: thou hast guided them in thy strength unto thy holy habitation" (Exo 15:13). Between those two passages comes the record of the slaying of the lamb, and the efficacy of its blood, while the remainder of the book is devoted to instructions regarding God's habitation.

The book of Leviticus covers a period in Israel's history of less than two months, for the whole of it (as well as the first ten chapters of Numbers) treats of what occurred between the first day of the second year, the twentieth day of the second month (Exo 40:17, Num 10:11). As we might expect, being the third book of Scripture, it views the people of God as on resurrection ground—regenerated. It is not so much doctrinal as experimental. The key is hung upon its door: "And the LORD called unto Moses, and spake unto him out of the *tabernacle*" (Lev 1:1). It naturally and necessarily comes after Exodus, informing us what we are redeemed for, being the book of Divine *fellowship and worship*. Here, we are shown the glorious privileges of the believer, the holy requirements of God, and the gracious provisions which He has made to meet them. It proclaims that God "will be sanctified in them that come nigh me" (Lev 10:3). Typically, it is full of Christ, setting Him before us as our Altar, Sacrifice, and High Priest.

The fourth book of Scripture treats of the practical side of the spiritual life, tracing the history of the believer in the world—for four is the number of the earth. Its key is also hung upon the porch: "And the LORD spake unto Moses in the *wilderness* of Sinai" (Num 1:1)—the "wilderness" being a symbol of this world in its fallen condition, alienated from God. It records at greater length than Exodus the history of Israel's journeyings and sojournings. Its theme then is the *walk and wanderings* of the believer during this life, depicting his testings and trials in the world. Note well, it is preceded by Leviticus, for only as we first commune with God within the veil are we fitted to go out into the world, and there, walk before Him. Typically, it represents the experiences we encounter in this scene of sin and suffering, our repeated and excuseless failures and God's longsufferance. It reveals God maintaining His holy government and yet dealing in grace with His own; destroying unbelieving rebels, yet preserving the faithful.

Deuteronomy is the bridge between the four books which precede, and the seven which follow it, for the former deal with Israel before they entered Canaan; and the latter, with their history after settling there. Its name signifies "a second law"—the ten commandments of Exodus 20 being repeated in Deuteronomy 5—the reason for this being, because of their awful sin at Kadesh-barnea (Num 13:26-14:4). God swore that all the adult Israelites who came out of Egypt (with the sole exception of Caleb and Joshua) should perish in the wilderness (Num 14). That fearful threat had now been carried out; and in Deuteronomy, we find Moses (himself on the eve of death) addressing the generation who had grown up in the wilderness. That new generation required to know on what terms they were about to enter Canaan, and on what conditions they should hold and enjoy it. The addresses of Moses, therefore, centered around two things: Reviewing the past and giving instructions for the future, pressing upon them the claims of God (Deu 10:12-13)—hence, the key words are "remember" (14 times), "hear" (over 30) and "do" (about 100). In its application to us, it reveals that whole-hearted *obedience to God* is the grand condition of possessing our possessions.

The book of Joshua records one of the most interesting and important portions of Israel's history. It treats of the period of their estate as a nation, of which Genesis was prophetic, and the rest of the Pentateuch immediately preparatory. The books of Moses would be imperfect without this one—as it is the capstone of them, so it is the foundation of those which follow. Omit Joshua, and there is a gap left in the sacred history which nothing could supply. Without it, what precedes would be incomprehensible and what follows unexplained. The sacred writer was directed to fill that gap by narrating the conquest and apportionment of the promised land. Thus, this book may be contemplated from two distinct, but closely related, standpoints: First, as the end of Israel's trials and wanderings in the wilderness; and second, as the beginning of their new life in the land. It is that twofold viewpoint which supplies the clue to its spiritual interpretation, as it alone solves the problem which so many have found puzzling in this book.

As the inheritance which the Lord appointed, promised, and gave to Israel, Canaan has rightly been regarded as a type of Heaven, unto which the Church is journeying through this wilderness-world. But Canaan was the scene of fierce battles, and that presents a serious difficulty unto many, though it should not. They point out that Heaven will not be the place of fighting, but of eternal rest and felicity; and then

ask, 'How could Israel's history in Canaan prefigure our experience on High?' It did not, but it strikingly and accurately foreshadowed what Christians must accomplish if they are to enter and enjoy "the purchased possession" (Eph 1:14). The book of Joshua not only exhibits the sovereign grace of God, His covenant-faithfulness, His mighty power put forth on behalf of His people, but it also reveals what was *required from them* in the discharge of their responsibility: Formidable obstacles had to be surmounted, a protracted warfare had to be engaged in, fierce foes overcome, before they entered into the actual enjoyment of the land.

If our conception of what constitutes a Christian or the character of the Christian life be altogether lopsided, little wonder that we have difficulty in rightly applying to ourselves the contents of that book which typically contains so much important instruction for us. If we will confine our viewpoint solely unto the sovereign grace of God in connection with our salvation, and deliberately close our eyes to all that Scripture teaches upon the discharge of our responsibility in relation thereto, then it would indeed be strange if we apprehended how that on the one hand, Canaan was a free gift unto Israel, which they entered by grace alone; and on the other, that they had to fight for every inch of it! But when we realise that "eternal life" is both the gift of God (Rom 6:23) and a "crown" which has to be won by faithfulness (Rev 2:10), that the Christian inheritance is not only purchased by the blood of the Lamb, but is also the "reward" of those who "serve the Lord Christ" (Col 3:24), then we should have no trouble in perceiving how the type answers to the antitype.

"Narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life" (Mat 7:14), i.e., unto Heaven, unto Glory. There is but one way that "leadeth unto" it, and that is the way of personal and practical holiness (Isa 35:8), "without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb 12:14). That "way" is a narrow one, for it shuts out the world and excludes self-pleasing. True, the few who tread it have previously been made partakers of spiritual life, for none of the unregenerate walk therein. Nevertheless, they must persevere in it to the end, resisting temptations to forsake it, and overcoming whatever would impede—if they are to enter Life itself. Salvation is indeed by grace, and grace alone, for human merit has no place therein; yet, good works are necessary, because it was to fit us for them that grace is given. In Joshua, we have a striking and blessed exemplification of the twofoldness of Truth, and the perfect balance of its essential parts. The sovereign grace of God and the discharge of His peoples' responsibility run side by side therein. Canaan was God's free gift unto Israel, yet, they had to fight for possession of it—let *that* be carefully pondered, and remember, it was typical.

The reader should keep steadily in mind that Israel's entrance into Canaan occurred at the *end* of their trials in the wilderness. Taking that alone, by itself, we have a foreshadowing of our entrance into Heaven at the close of this life (Rev 14:13); but viewing Israel's entrance into Canaan in the light of all that is recorded in the book of Joshua, we must regard what precedes as the experiences of the soul prior *to* conversion, and Israel's history there as adumbrating his *new* life. Thus, in Exodus, we see the natural man in bondage to sin and Satan; in Leviticus, we behold him as one to whom God is speaking, making known His holy requirements; in Numbers, he finds himself in a great howling wilderness, which is what the world appears to one who has been awakened by the Spirit; while in Deuteronomy, he learns the strictness and spirituality of the Law, which cuts into pieces his self-righteousness and reveals that Another than Moses must become the Captain of his salvation, if ever he is to be estated in the antitypical Palestine.

Let the reader also remember that Israel's entrance into Canaan marked the beginning of a distinct state in their history, and there we have a figure of the new life of the converted soul. Observe carefully how definitely and clearly this is brought out in the type. It was a *new* generation of Israel (the second and not the adult one that came out of Egypt), which is here in view; that they were under a new leader—no longer Moses but Joshua; that they were inducted into a new sphere—delivered from the wilderness, entering into Canaan. Thus, we have a picture of those who have passed through a season of conviction of sin, who have felt the terrors of the Law, and have now been brought to put their trust in Jesus Christ, the antitypical Joshua. Conversion dates the end of the old life and the beginning of the new. As Israel's entrance into Canaan marked the end of their wilderness wanderings, so at conversion, the soul experiences the verity of Christ's promise, "Come unto me...and I will give you rest" (Mat 11:28). Likewise, as Israel's entrance into Canaan marked the beginning of their life of conquest, so at conversion we begin that "good fight of faith" (1Ti 6:12), which is required before we can enter our Eternal Rest.

Those two aspects of the Christian's rest are brought together in Hebrews 4. First, "We which have believed *do* enter into rest" (Heb 4:3). The moment a regenerated, awakened, convicted soul savingly believes in Christ, the burden of his sins rolls away, and peace of conscience, rest of soul, assurance of acceptance by God, are his. Yet, he is not there, and then taken to heaven. No, indeed, he is now made conscious of

foes—both within and without—of which previously, he knew nothing. He is now called upon to mortify the flesh, resist the Devil, overcome the world. Not by his own might, but in the strength of the Lord, under the leadership of the antitypical Joshua; and this, *in order to* an entrance into the promised inheritance. Thus, second, Hebrews 4:11 bids us “Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest” Yes, “labour” is necessary (compare Joh 6:27, 2Co 5:9): Fighting the good fight, finishing our course, keeping the faith is required, if we are to receive “a crown of righteousness” (2Ti 4:7-8).

THE DOCTRINE OF RECONCILIATION

8. *Its Scope*

Who are the ones from whom the wrath of God has been turned away and to whom He is reconciled? Who are they whose enmity against God has been slain and are actually reconciled to Him? Though those questions be quite distinct; yet are they intimately allied the one to the other. Though they relate to separate transactions, yet, really, they are but parts of one whole. Those inquiries signify much the same as though we asked, 'On whose behalf did Christ satisfy God?' Who are the ones who must eventually partake of the saving benefits of His mediation? Theologians have been by no means agreed in the answers they have returned, for those questions necessarily raise the fundamental issues which have divided Christendom into Calvinists and Arminians. That issue may be more clearly drawn, if we make our question yet more definite and specific: 'For whom did Christ act as Surety and Substitute?—For all the human race, or the Church only?' 'What was the scope of the Everlasting Covenant?—Did it embrace the whole of Adam's posterity, or did it respect only a chosen remnant of them?'

Who are the ones who will eternally benefit from the great Propitiation? Probably most of our readers would reply, 'All who truly exercise faith in the blood of Christ.' Nor would their answer be incorrect, though it would be more satisfactory to frame it from the Divine side of things, rather than from the human side. As it is made from the latter, we have to push the inquiry further back and ask, 'Who are the ones who savingly trust in the blood of Christ?' Not all who hear the Gospel—for even the majority of them turn a deaf ear unto it, so that its preachers have to exclaim, "Who hath believed our report?" (Isa 53:1). Perhaps the reader will return answer to this last inquiry: 'Those who are willing to receive Christ as their Lord and Saviour.' Correct—But who are they? By nature, none are willing to do that: "No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44), i.e. overcome his reluctance. "Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa 110:3) gives the Scriptural answer. From the Divine side, the reply to our opening question is: 'Those on whose behalf the great propitiation was made—God's people.'

If there were no explicit statements in Scripture, there are many implicit ones therein from which we may determine with certainty the precise scope of reconciliation. The ordination, impetration (accomplishment), and application (bestowal of the benefits) of Christ's work must of necessity be co-extensive. We say "of necessity," for otherwise, we should be affirming that the ways of God were "unequal"—inconsistent, inharmonious. What God the Father purposed, that God the Son effected; and what He effected, God the Spirit applies and bestows. The only other possible alternative is to predicate a defeated Father, a disappointed Christ, and a disgraced Holy Spirit—which is the kind of "God" the Arminians believe in. But there are clear and decisive statements in Scripture, which reveal to us the extent of the Father's purpose and the scope of the Son's purchase. Says the Father concerning His Son, "For the transgression of *my people* was he stricken" (Isa 53:8). "Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins" (Mat 1:21). Said the Son, "the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11)—and not the goats.

The idea of a mere conditional "provision" for the reconciliation of all mankind is a theory which sets aside the absolute purpose of God, respecting the work of Christ. That theory renders of no account the promises of God concerning the death of His Son, for by pleading that, it made the salvation of all men possible; in actuality, it denies that it made the salvation of any man *certain*. God the Father promised His Son a definite reward upon the successful accomplishment of His work. "He shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa 53:10, 11). How could He be satisfied if any of those for whom He was their sin-offering were finally lost? "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water" (Zec 9:11). But what security could there be for the fulfilment of those promises if no infallible provision was made for the regeneration of those persons; and instead, everything was left contingent on the wills of men!

Consider the special character in which Christ died. "Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great *shepherd* of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ" (Heb 13:20, 21). In serving as the Shepherd, Christ died for the sheep, and not for the goats. Said He, "I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (Joh 10:11); and

mark it well, they are represented as being His “sheep” *before* they believe: “And other sheep I have [as the Father’s gift and charge], which are not of this [*Jewish*] fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice [when the Spirit quickens them]; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd” (Joh 10:16). But all men pertain not to the “sheep” of Christ; said He to those who rejected Him: “But ye believe not, because ye are not of my sheep, as I said unto you” (Joh 10:26). The “sheep” are the elect, God’s chosen people. Christ Himself declared that His “flock” is a “little” one (Luk 12:32); and therefore, not the whole human race.

Christ laid down His life as a *Husband*. “For thy Maker is thine husband; the LORD of hosts is his name; and thy Redeemer the Holy One of Israel; The God of the whole earth [and not merely Palestine] shall he be called” (Isa 54:5)—note this comes right after Isaiah 53! Equally clear is the teaching of the New Testament: “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might [should] sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church” (Eph 5:25-27). As the Husband, He died for His *Wife* (Rev 19:7). It was His love which caused Him to do so, and it was a discriminating love—set upon a definite object. And again, we say, note this well, that the Church for whom Christ gave Himself is not here viewed as a regenerated and believing company, but as one whose members needed *to be* sanctified and cleansed (Eph 5:26). He died not for believers as such, but while “we were enemies” (Rom 5:10). Nor can Christ be foiled of His design, for He will yet present the Church to Himself “a glorious Church” and not a mutilated one—as it would be if any of its members were finally missing.

Christ served as a *Surety*. He is expressly denominated the “surety” of a better covenant (Heb 7:22); and unless we are prepared to believe that Christ is defeated in His undertaking, then we cannot extend the persons for whom He was Sponsor beyond those who are finally saved. To speak of a “surety” failing is surely a contradiction in terms. If he does not, with certainty, prevent loss, how can he be a “surety”? To remove any doubt on this point, Scripture declares, “He shall not fail” (Isa 42:4). He shall yet triumphantly exclaim, “Behold I and the children which God hath given me” (Heb 2:13). Christ’s suretyship was no fictitious one, but real. Under that office, He engaged Himself to make satisfaction for certain people, and by His engagement to cancel all their debt and fulfill all righteousness in their stead. And since He has perfectly performed this—as much and as truly as though those for whom He acted had themselves endured all the punishment due their sins and had rendered to the Law all the obedience it required—the consequence is clear and unescapable: Those for whom He engaged and satisfied are they who are actually saved from their sins and pronounced righteous by God, and none else.

The very nature of Christ’s satisfaction determines to a demonstration those who are the beneficiaries of it. It was a *federal* work. There was both a covenant and legal oneness between Christ and those for whom He transacted. The Saviour stood as the Bondsman of a particular people, and if a single one of those whose obligations He assumed received not a full discharge, then Divine justice would be reduced to a farce. It was a substitutionary work. Christ acted not only on the behalf of, but in the stead of, those who had been given to Him by the Father; therefore, all those whose sins He bore must of necessity have their sins remitted—God cannot punish twice: First, the Substitute; and then, the subject. It was a *legal* work: Every requirement of the Divine law, both preceptive and punitive, was fulfilled by Christ. Therefore, all for whom He acted must receive the reward of His obedience, which is everlasting life. It was a *priestly* work: He presented Himself as an offering to God, and since God accepted His sacrifice, its efficacy and merits must be imputed unto all those for whom it was offered.

The *intercession* of Christ defines the scope of His atoning sacrifice. The death and intercession of Christ are co-extensive: Define the extent of the one, and you determine the extent of the other. That must be so, for the latter is based upon the former and is expressive of its grand design. Scripture is too plain on this point to allow of any uncertainty or mistake. “Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession *for us*.” (Rom 8:33, 34). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Heb 7:25). To make assurance doubly sure on this important matter, our great High Priest has expressly declared, “I pray not for the world” (Joh 17:9); thus, there must be a “world” for whom He did not die. For whom did He say He prays? “But for them which thou hast given me; for they are thine” (Joh 17:9).

There are those who suppose that the doctrine of particular redemption detracts from the goodness and grace of God and from the merits of Christ; and therefore, conclude it cannot be true. But this mistake becomes manifest if we examine the alternative view. Surely, it is not honouring the goodness and grace of God to affirm that the whole human race has nothing but a bare possibility of salvation; yea, a great probability of perishing, notwithstanding all that He has done to save them. Yet, that is exactly what is involved in the Arminian scheme, which avers that Christ died to make the salvation of all men possible. That love and grace must indeed be greater, which *infallibly secures* the salvation of some, even though a minority than that which only provides a mere contingency for all. To us, it seems to indicate coldness and indifference for God to leave it a second time to the mutable will of man to secure his salvation, when man's will at its best estate ruined Adam and all his posterity.

If infinite love and goodness was shown to all men in giving Christ to die for them, would it not also give the Holy Spirit to all of them to effectually apply salvation—to subdue their lusts, overcome their enmity, make them willing to comply with the terms of the Gospel, and fix their adherence to it? The Scriptures set forth the love and kindness of God as one which makes not merely a bare offer of salvation to sinners, but as *actually saving* “by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Tit 3:4-5). The Word of Truth declares that the “God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;)” (Eph 2:4-5). How would God's love and mercy toward men appear if He gave Christ for all, only to make it possible that they might be saved, and then left by far the greater part of them ignorant of even the knowledge of salvation; and a large number of those who are acquainted with it, not made willing to embrace it in a day of His power?

But over against all that has been set forth in the above paragraphs, some will quote, “God was in Christ, reconciling the *world* unto himself” (2Co 5:19), and suppose that by so doing, they have completely overthrown the whole of what has been brought out. But surely, the candid reader can perceive for himself that what has been presented in the whole of the foregoing is not the theories of Calvinistic theologians, nor the subtle reasonings of metaphysicians, but rather the plain and simple teaching of Holy Writ itself. Thus, whatever 2 Corinthians 5:19 does or does not mean, it cannot annul all the other passages which have been appealed to. God's Word does not contradict itself, and it is positively sinful for any of us to pit those verses we like against those we dislike. If we humbly look to God for wisdom and patiently search His Word, it should be found that 2 Corinthians 5:19 can be interpreted in perfect harmony with all other Scripture; and that, without any wrestling or straining; namely, by the same principles of exegesis, which we apply to all other passages.

Like every other portion of the Word, 2 Corinthians 5:19 needs *interpreting*, by which is meant, its terms explained. Perhaps some demur and say, ‘No explanation is necessary: The verse says what it means and means what it says.’ We fully agree that it means what it says, but are we sure that we *understand* what it “means”? The meaning of a verse is not obtainable from the sound of its words, but rather, from the sense of them; and that can only be ascertained from the way in which they are used, and by comparing other passages where the same subject is in view. If we take general and indefinite terms and understand them in an unlimited sense, then we soon land ourselves in the grossest absurdities. For instance, when the apostle said, “I am made *all things* to all men, that I might by *all means* save some” (1Co 9:22), he surely did not include duplicity, unfaithfulness, or the use of carnal means. When we are exhorted, “In *every* thing give thanks” (1Th 5:18), we must exclude a course of sinning, for God condemns the one who blesses himself in a wicked way (Deu 29:19).

Now, just as “all things” and “all means” in 1 Corinthians 9:22 are general expressions, which other passages (and considerations) require us to qualify, so the term “world” in 2 Corinthians 5:19 is an indefinite one; and its scope is to be determined by the tenor of the passage in which it occurs, and its meaning understood in a way harmonious with the teaching of Holy Writ. Any one who has taken the trouble to make a concordant study of the word “world” will have discovered that it is a most ambiguous term, that it has widely different significations in Scripture; and therefore, no definition of its extent can be framed from the bare mention of the term itself. Sometimes the “world” has reference to the material world, and sometimes, to its inhabitants; it is used in both those senses in John 1:10. In some cases, it refers to only a very small part of its inhabitants, as in “shew thyself to the world” (Joh 7:4), and “the world is gone after him” (Joh 12:19), where the references are to only a portion of Judea, and *cannot* signify “all mankind.” Other passages will be noticed in the article which immediately follows, where further proof is given that the term

“world” is far from being used with one uniform significance—and that it rarely means the whole human race.

