

The Advent of the Spirit

At Pentecost the Holy Spirit came as He had never come before. Something then transpired which inaugurated a new era for the world, a new power for righteousness, a new basis for fellowship. On that day the fearing Peter was transformed into the intrepid evangelist. On that day the new wine of Christianity burst the old bottles of Judaism, and the Word went forth in a multiplicity of Gentile tongues. On that day more souls seem to have been truly regenerated than during all the three and a half years of Christ's public ministry. What had happened? It is not enough to say that the Spirit of God was given, for He had been given long before, both to individuals and the nation of Israel (Neh. 9:20, Hag. 2:5); no, the pressing question is, *In what sense* was He then given? This leads us to carefully consider *the meaning of the Spirit's advent*.

1. *It was the fulfillment of the Divine promise.* First, of the Father Himself. During the Old Testament dispensation, He declared, again and again, that He would pour out the Spirit upon His people: see Proverbs 1:23, Isaiah 32:15, Joel 2:28, etc.; and now these gracious declarations were accomplished. Second, of John the Baptist. When he was stirring the hearts of multitudes by his call to repentance and his demand of baptism, many thought he must be the long-expected Messiah, but he declared unto them, "I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: He shall baptize you with the *Holy Spirit and with fire*" (Luke 3:15, 16). Accordingly He did so on the day of Pentecost, as Acts 2:3, 4 plainly show.

Third, of Christ. Seven times over the Lord Jesus avowed that He would give or send the Holy Spirit: Luke 24:49; John 7:37-39; 14:16-19; 14:26; 15:26; 16:7; Acts 1:5, 8. From these we may particularly notice, "When the Comforter is come, whom *I will send* unto you from the Father... He shall testify of Me" (John 15:26); "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, *I will send Him* unto you" (John 16:7). That which took place in John 20:22 and in Acts 2 was the fulfillment of those promises. In them we behold the *faith* of the Mediator: He had appropriated the promise which the Father had given to Him, "Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Spirit, *He* hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear" (Acts 2:33)—it was by faith's anticipation the Lord Jesus spoke as He did in the above passages.

"The Holy Spirit was God's ascension gift to Christ, that He might be bestowed by Christ, as His ascension gift to the Church. Hence Christ had said, 'Behold, I send the promise of My Father upon you' (Luke 24:49). This was the promised gift of the Father to the Son, and the Saviour's promised gift to His believing people. How easy now to reconcile the apparent contradiction of Christ's earlier and later words: 'I will pray the Father, and *He shall give you* another Comforter' (John 14:16); and then, afterward, 'If I depart, I will send Him unto you' (John 16:7). The Spirit was the Father's answer to the prayer of the Son; and so the gift was transferred by Him to the mystical body of which He is the head" (A.T. Pierson in "The Acts of the Holy Spirit").

2. *It was the fulfillment of an important Old Testament type.* It is this which explains to us why the Spirit was given on the day of "Pentecost," which was one of the principal religious feasts of Israel. Just as there was a profound significance to Christ's dying on Passover Day (giving us the antitype of Exodus 12), so there was in the coming of the

Spirit on the fiftieth day after Christ's resurrection. The type is recorded in Leviticus 23, to which we can here make only the briefest allusion. In the 4th verse of Leviticus 23 we read, "These are the feasts of the LORD." The first of them is the passover (v. 5), and the second "unleavened bread" (v. 6), etc., the two together speaking of the sinless Christ offering Himself as a sacrifice for the sins of His people. The third is the "wave-sheaf" (v. 10, etc.) which was the "firstfruits" of the harvest (v. 10), presented to God "on the morrow after the (Jewish) Sabbath" (v. 11), a figure of Christ's resurrection: 1 Corinthians 15:23.

The fourth is the feast of "weeks" (see Exo. 34:22, Deut. 16:10, 16), so called because of the seven complete weeks of Leviticus 23:15; also known as "Pentecost" (which means "fiftieth") because of the "fifty days" of Leviticus 23:16. It was then the balance of the harvest *began* to be gathered in. On that day Israel was required to present unto God "two wave loaves," which were also designated "the *firstfruits* unto the Lord" (Lev. 23:17). The antitype of which was the saving of the three thousand on the day of Pentecost: the "firstfruits" of Christ's atonement, compare James 1:18. The first loaf represented those redeemed from among the Jews, the second loaf was *anticipatory* and pointed to the gathering in of God's elect from among the Gentiles, begun in Acts 10.

3. *It was the beginning of a new dispensation.* This was plainly intimated in the type of Leviticus 23, for on the day of Pentecost Israel was definitely required to offer a "new meat offering unto the Lord" (v. 16). Still more clearly was it foreannounced in a yet more important and significant type, namely, that of the beginning of the Mosaic economy, which took place only when the nation of Israel formally entered into covenant relationship with Jehovah at Sinai. Now it is exceedingly striking to observe that just *fifty days* elapsed from the time when the Hebrews emerged from the house of bondage till they received the law from the mouth of Moses. They left Egypt on the fifteenth of the first month (Num. 33:3), and arrived at Sinai at the first of the third month (Exo. 19:1: note "the same day"), which would be the forty-sixth. The next day Moses went up into the mount, and three days later the law was delivered (Exo. 19:11)! And just as there was a period of fifty days from Israel's deliverance from Egypt until the beginning of the Mosaic economy, so the same length of time followed the resurrection of Christ (when His people were delivered from Hell) to the beginning of the Christian economy!

That a new dispensation commenced at Pentecost further appears from the "tongues like as *of fire*" (Acts 2:3). When John the Baptist announced that Christ would baptize "with the Holy Spirit and with fire," the last words might have suggested material burning to any people except Jews, but in their minds far other thoughts would be awakened. To them it would recall the scene when their great progenitor asked God, who promised he should inherit that land wherein he was a stranger, "Lord GOD, *whereby shall I know that I shall inherit it?*" (Gen. 15:8). The answer was, "Behold, a smoking furnace and a burning lamp," etc. (Gen. 15:17-18). It would recall the fire which Moses saw in the burning bush. It would recall the "pillar of fire" which guided by night, and the Shekinah glory which descended and filled the tabernacle. Thus, in the promise of a baptism by fire, they would at once recognize the approach of *a new manifestation of the presence and power of God!*

Again; when we read that "there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it *sat* upon each of them" (Acts 2:3), further evidence is found that a new dispensation had now commenced. "The word 'sat' in Scripture marks *an ending and a begin-*

ning. The process of preparation is ended and the established order has begun. It marks the end of creation and the beginning of normal forces. ‘In six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and *rested* the seventh day’ (Exo. 20:11). There is no weariness in God. He did not rest from fatigue: what it means is that all creative work was accomplished. The same figure is used of the Redeemer. Of Him it is said ‘when He had by Himself purged our sins, (He) *sat down* on the right hand of the Majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3). No other priesthood had sat down. The priests of the Temple ministered standing, because their ministry was provisional and preparatory, a parable and prophecy. Christ’s own ministry was part of the preparation for the coming of the Spirit. Until He ‘sat down’ in glory, there could be no dispensation of the Spirit . . . When the work of redemption was complete, the Spirit was given, and when He came He ‘*sat*.’ He reigns in the Church as Christ reigns in the Heavens” (S. Chadwick in “The Way to Pentecost”).—A.W.P.

The Epistle to the Hebrews

70. *The Faith of Moses' Parents* 11:23.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents” (Heb. 11:23). A considerable length of time elapsed between what is recorded in the preceding verse and what is here before us. That interval is bridged by what is found in Exodus 1. There we see a marked revolution taking place in the lot of the Hebrews. In the days of Joseph, the Egyptians had been kind, giving them the land of Goshen to dwell in. Then followed another dynasty, and a king arose who “knew not Joseph”—probably a foreigner who had conquered Egypt. This new monarch was a tyrant of the worst kind, who sorely oppressed the descendants of Abraham. So subject to drastic changes are the fortunes both of individuals and nations: hence the force of those words, “In the day of prosperity be joyful, but in the day of adversity consider: God also hath set the one over against the other, to the end that man should find nothing after him” (Ecc. 7:14).

The policy of the new ruler of Egypt quickly became apparent: “And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies” (Exo. 1:9, 10). Ah, but though “there are many devices in a man’s heart; nevertheless the counsel of the LORD that shall stand” (Prov. 19:21). So it proved here, for “the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew” (Exo. 1:12). Yes, “the LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect. The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of His heart to all generations” (Psa. 33:10, 11).

Next, the king of Egypt gave orders to the midwives that every male child of the Hebrews should be slain at birth (Exo. 1:15, 16). But all the laws which men may make against the promises that God has given to His church are doomed to certain failure. God had promised unto Abraham a numerous “seed” (Gen. 13:15), and had declared to Jacob, “fear not to go down into Egypt; for I will there make of thee a great nation” (Gen. 46:3); as well, then, might Pharaoh attempt to stop the sun from shining as prevent the growth of the children of Israel. Therefore do we read, “But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men children alive” (Exo. 1:17).

Refusing to accept defeat, “Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river” (Exo. 1:22). Now that the execution of this barbarous edict had been entrusted unto his own people, no doubt Pharaoh imagined that success was fully assured for his evil design: yet it was at this very season that God brought to the birth the one who was to emancipate his suffering nation. “How blind are poor sinful mortals, in all their contrivances against the church of God. When they think all things secure, and that they shall not fail of their end, that their counsels are laid so deep as not to be blown upon, their power so uncontrollable and the way in which they are engaged so effectual, that God Himself can hardly deliver it out of their hands; He that sits on high laughs them to scorn, and with an Almighty facility lays provisions for the deliverance of His Church, and for *their* ultimate ruin” (John Owen).

“And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive. And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. And the woman conceived, and bare a son” (Exo. 1:21 and 2:1, 2). Amram and Jochebed refused to be intimidated by the cruel commandment of the king, and acted as though no injunction had been issued by him. Were

they reckless and foolish? No indeed, they took their orders from a far higher authority than any earthly potentate. The fear of the Lord was upon them, and therefore they were delivered from that fear of man which bringeth a snare. In covenant relationship with the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, this godly couple from the tribe of Levi allowed not the wrath of man to disrupt their domestic happiness.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents” (Heb. 11:23). It is the faith of Moses’ parents that is here celebrated. But because it is mentioned principally to introduce the discourse of himself and his faith, and also that which is spoken belongs unto *his honour*; it is thus peculiarly expressed. He saith not ‘By faith the parents of Moses when he was born, hid him,’ but ‘By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents’; that is, by the faith of the parents who hid him” (John Owen). Ah, here is the explanation of the conduct of Amram and Jochebed: it was “by faith” they acted: it was a living, supernatural, spiritual faith which sustained their hearts in this crisis, and kept them “in perfect peace” (Isa. 26:3). Nothing will so quieten the mind and still its fears as a real trusting in the Lord of hosts.

The birth of Moses occurred during the very height and fury of the attack that was being made upon the infant males of the Hebrews. Herein we may discover a striking foreshadowment of the attempt which was made upon the life of the Christ-child, when, in his efforts to slay Him, Herod gave orders that all the children in Bethelhem and in all the coasts thereof from two years old and under, should be slain (Matt. 2:16). Many a typical representation of the principal events in the life of the Redeemer is to be found in the Old Testament, and at scores of points did Moses in particular prefigure the great Deliverer of His people. It is a deeply interesting line of study, which we commend to our readers, to go over the history of Moses and note down the many details in which he pictured the Lord Jesus.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment” (Heb. 11:23). It seems clear from the final clause that Pharaoh had either given orders that the Hebrews should notify his officers whenever a male child was born unto them, or that they themselves should throw him into the river. Instead of complying with this atrocious enactment, the parents of Moses concealed their infant for three months, which supplies us with a clear example of “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). It is true that the Lord requires His people to “be subject unto the higher powers” (Rom. 13:1), but this holds good *only so long as* the “higher powers” (human governors) require the Christian to do nothing which God has forbidden, or prohibit nothing which God has commanded. The inferior authority must always give place before the superior. As this is a principle of great importance practically, and one concerning which confusion exists in some quarters, let us amplify a little.

Holy Scripture must never be made to contradict itself: one of its precepts must never be pressed so far as to nullify another; each one is to be interpreted and applied in harmony with the general analogy of faith, and in the light of the modifications which the Spirit Himself has given. For example; children are required to honour their parents, yet Ephesians 6:1 shows that their obedience is to be “in the Lord”; if a parent required something directly opposed unto Holy Writ, then he is not to be obeyed. Christian wives are required by God to submit themselves unto their husbands, and that “in every thing” (Eph. 5:24), obeying them (1 Peter 3:6); nevertheless, their subjection is to be of the same

character as that of the Church unto Christ (Eph. 5:24); and inasmuch as He never demands anything from the Church which is evil, so He does not require the wife to obey injunctions which are positively harmful—if a thoughtless husband should insist on that which would be highly injurious to his wife's health, she is to refuse him. Submission does not mean slavery!

Now the same modification we have pointed out above obtains in connection with the exhortations of Romans 13:1-7. In proof, let us cite a clear example to the point from either Testament. In Daniel 3 we find that the king of Babylon—the head of the “powers that be”—erected an image unto himself, and demanded that, on a given signal, all must “fall down and worship” the same (v. 5). But the three Hebrew captives declared, “Be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” (v. 18); and the Lord vindicated their non-compliance. In Acts 4 we see Peter and John arrested by the Jewish “powers,” who, “Commanded them not to speak at all nor teach in the name of Jesus” (v. 18). Did the Apostles submit to this ordinance? No, instead they said, “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye” (v. 19). As Romans 13:4 declares, the magistrate is “the minister of God to thee *for good*”: should he require that which the Word condemns as evil, he is not to be obeyed.

And what was it that enabled the parents of Moses to act so boldly and set at nought the royal edict? Our text furnishes clear answer: it was “by faith” they acted. Had they been destitute of faith, most probably the “king's commandment” would have filled them with dismay, and in order that their own lives should be spared, would have promptly informed his officers of the birth of Moses. But instead of so notifying the Egyptians, they concealed the fact, and though by preserving the child they followed a course which was highly hazardous to sense, yet under God it became the path of security. Thus, the particular aspect of our theme which here receives illustration is *the courage and boldness of faith*: faith overcoming the fear of man. That brings before us another characteristic of this heavenly grace, one which evidences its excellency, and one which should move us to pray daily for an increase of the same.

Faith is a spiritual grace which enables its possessor to look away from human terrors, and to confide in an unseen God. It declares, “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?” (Psa. 27:1). True it is that *this* faith is not always in exercise, yea, more often is its bright shining overcast by the clouds of unbelief, and eclipsed by the murky dust which Satan raises in the soul. We say, “this faith,” for there are thousands of professing Christians all around us who boast that *their* faith is constantly in exercise, and that they are rarely if ever tormented by doubts or filled with alarms. Ah, my reader, the “faith” of such people is not “the faith of God's elect” (Titus 1:1), entirely dependent upon the renewing power of the Holy Spirit; no, it is but a natural faith in the bare letter of Scripture, which by an act of their own will they can call into exercise whenever they please. But unto such the many “Fear nots” of God's Word have no application! But when the dew of Heaven falls upon the regenerated heart, its language is, “What time I am afraid, I will trust in Thee” (Psa. 56:3).

Great indeed is the power of a God-given and God-sustained faith: not only to produce outward works, but to affect the workings of the soul within. This is something which is not sufficiently considered these days, when attention is confirmed almost exclusively to

“visible results.” Faith regulates the affections: it curbs impetuosity and works patience, it chases away gloom and brings peace and joy, it subdues carnal fears and produces courage. Moreover, faith not only sustains the heart under severe trials, performs difficult duties, but (as the sequel shows) obtains important benefits. How pertinent, then, was this particular case unto those to whom this Epistle was first sent! How well was it calculated to encourage the sorely-tried and wavering Hebrews to remain faithful to Christ and to trust God with the issue and outcome!

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents.” Probably two things are included in these words: first, that they concealed all tidings of his birth; second, that they hid him in some part of the house. No doubt their diligence was accomplished by fervent cries to God, and the putting forth of a daily trust in Him. The fact that it was “by faith” that they “hid” him, shows that real spiritual faith is cautious and wary, and not reckless and presumptuous. Though faith overcomes carnal fear, yet it does not disdain the use of lawful means for overcoming danger. It is fanaticism, and not faith, which tempts God. To needlessly expose ourselves unto danger is sinful. Faith is no enemy unto lawful means as Acts 27:31 plainly enough shows.

It is to be observed that the words of our text go beyond Exodus 2:2, where the preserving of Moses is attributed unto his mother. As both the parents were engaged in the hazard, both had a hand in the work; no doubt Amram took the lead in advice and contriving, and Jochebed in the actual execution. As the parents have a joint interest in their children, both should share in the care and training of them, each seeking to help the other. Where there is an agreement between husband and wife in faith and in the fear of God, it makes way for a blessed success in their duties. When difficult tasks confront husbands and wives, it is their wisdom to apply themselves unto that part and phase of it which each is best suited for. “It is a happy thing when yoke-fellows draw together in the yoke of faith, as the heirs of the grace of God; and where they do this in a religious concern for the good of their children, to preserve them not only from those who would destroy their lives, but corrupt their minds” (Matthew Henry).

The “three months” teaches us that the parents of Moses *persevered* in that which they began well. They were prudent from the hour of his birth, and they maintained their vigilance. It is no use to shut the stable-door when the horse is gone. Care in preventing danger is to be continued as long as the danger is threatened. Some, perhaps, may ask, Would it be right for the people of God today to give shelter to one of His saints or servants who was being unjustly hounded by “the powers that be”? Surely; it is always the duty of love to shield others from harm. But suppose the hidden ones are being inquired after by the authorities, may they still be concealed? Yes, if it is done without the impeachment of the truth, for it is never permissible to lie—to do so shows a distrust of the sufficiency of God. Should the officers ask whether you are sheltering one they seek, either remain silent, or so prudently word your answer as will neither betray the party nor be guilty of falsehood.

Others may ask, Since God purposed to make Moses the leader of His people and accomplish such a memorable work through him, why did He not by some wonderful and powerful miracle preserve him from the rage of Pharaoh? Answer: God was able to send a legion of angels for his protection, or to have visibly displayed His might by other means; but He did not. It is generally God’s pleasure to show His power through weak and despised means. Thus it was during the infancy of His own incarnate Son: God

warned Joseph by a dream, and he took the young child and His mother into Egypt, remaining there till Herod was dead. Frequently it please the Most High to magnify His providence by things which men despise, by feeble instruments, and this, that it may the more plainly appear the excellency of the power is *of Him*.

In the preservation of the infant Moses, we may see a blessed illustration of how God preserves His elect through infancy and childhood, and from all that threatens their existence prior to the time when He regenerates them. This is expressed in Jude 1: “Preserved in Jesus Christ and called.” How blessed is it for the Christian to look back behind the time when God called him out of darkness into His marvelous light, and discern His guarding hand upon him when he was dead in trespasses and sins. There are few if any of the Lord’s people who cannot recall more than one incident in early life when there was “but a step” betwixt them and death; yet even then, as in the case of the infant Moses, a kind Providence was watching over them. Then let us return thanks for the same.

“By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, *because they saw he was a proper child*: and they were not afraid of the king’s commandments.” It is really surprising how many of the commentators, led by sentiment, have quite missed the meaning of this verse. Exodus 2:2 states that his mother saw “that he was a goodly child”: the Hebrew word (“*tob*”) being the same term whereby God approved of His works of creation and declared them perfect (Gen. 1), from which the conclusion has been drawn that it was the exceeding fairness or beauty of the babe which so endeared him to his parents they were moved to disregard the king’s edict, and take special pains to preserve him. But this is only carnalizing Scripture, in fact, contradicting what the Holy Spirit has here said.

Hebrews 11:23 distinctly affirms that it was “by faith” the parents of Moses acted and *this* it is which explains their conduct. Now Romans 10:17 tells us, “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God”: thus Amram and Jochebed must have received a Divine revelation (not recorded in the Old Testament), and this word from God formed the foundation of their confidence, and supplied the motive-power of what they did. It is true they knew from the prophecy given to Abram (Gen. 15) that the time for the deliverance of Israel from Egypt was drawing near, as they also knew from the prediction of Joseph (Gen. 50:24) that God was going to undertake for His people. Yet we are persuaded that Hebrews 11:23 refers to something more definite and specific. Most probably the Lord made known to these parents that *their* child was to be the promised deliverer, and furnished them beforehand with a description of him.

This revelation which Amram and Jochebed “heard” from God they *believed*, and that, before Moses was born. When, in due time, he was given to them, they “saw he was a proper child”—it was *the discernment of faith*, and not the mere admiration of nature. As Acts 7:20 declares “in which time was born Moses, and was beautiful to God” (Bagster International), which indicates an appearance of something Divine or supernatural. They recognized he was peculiarly grateful and acceptable to God: they perceived something remarkable in him, which was the Divine token to them that he would be the deliverer of Israel. “Probably there was some mark of future excellency impressed on the child, which gave promise of something extraordinary” (John Calvin). “The beauty of the Lord set upon him as a presage that he was born to great things, and that by conversing with God his face would shine (Exo. 34:29), and what bright and illustrious actions he should do for the deliverance of Israel, and how his name should shine in the sacred re-

cord” (Matthew Henry).

Resting with implicit confidence upon the revelation which they had received from Jehovah, their faith now confirmed by God’s mark of identification upon the babe, the parents of Moses preferred its safety before their own. It was not simply they trusted God for the outcome, but in their souls was that faith which is “the substance of things hoped for” (Heb. 11:1), and in consequence “they were *not afraid* of the king’s commandments.” Had it been only a natural or human admiration which they had for a signally beautiful child, then it had been “by affection” or “by infatuation” they hid the infant; and that would only have intensified their “fear,” for the more they admired the infant, the more afraid would they have been of harm befalling it.

Mere beauty is by no means a sure sign of excellency, as 1 Samuel 16:7, 2 Samuel 14:25, Proverbs 31:30 plainly enough show. No, the infant Moses was “beautiful *to God*” (Acts 7:20), and perceiving this, Amram and Jochebed acted accordingly. First, they “hid” him for three months, “and when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes” etc. (Exo. 2:3): it may be that the Egyptians searched the houses of the Hebrews every three months. No doubt it was under the Divine direction that the parents of Moses now acted, for surely the placing of this precious child by the brink of the fatal “river” (Exo. 1:22) was the last thing that carnal reason had suggested! We do not at all agree with those who think the faith of Moses’ parents wavered when they placed him in the ark: when one lawful means of preservation from persecution will no longer secure, it is a duty to betake ourselves unto some other which is more likely to do so—Matthew 10:23.

In the kind providence of God, His interests and ours are often twined together, and then nature is allowed to work; though even then, grace must bear sway. So it was here: the parents of Moses had received a direct commandment from God how to act and what to do (as the “by faith” clearly denotes), and in their case, what He prescribed harmonized with their own feelings. But sometimes God’s requirements and our natural affections clash, as was the case when He required Abraham to offer up Isaac, and then the claims of the lower must yield to the Higher. When the current of human affection clashes not with God’s express precepts we may follow it, for He allows us to take in the help of nature: “a brother beloved . . . *both in the flesh*, and in the Lord” (Phile. 16).—A.W.P.

The Life of David

22. His Unbelief.

After Saul's departure (1 Sam. 26:25), David took stock of his situation, but unfortunately he left God out of his calculations. During tedious and trying delays, and especially when outward things seem to be all going against us, there is grave danger of giving way to unbelief. Then it is we are very apt to forget former mercies, and fear the worst. And when faith staggers, obedience wavers, and self-expedients are frequently employed, which later involve us in great difficulties. So it was now with the one whose varied life we are seeking to trace. As David considered the situation he was still in, remembered the inconstancy and treachery of Saul, things appeared very gloomy to him. Knowing full well the king's jealousy, and perhaps reasoning that he would now regard him with still more evil eye, since God so favoured him, David feared the worst.

"The moment in which faith attains any triumph, is often one of peculiar danger. Self-confidence may be engendered by success, and pride may spring out of honour that humility has won; or else, if faithfulness, after having achieved its victory, still finds itself left in the midst of danger and sorrow, the hour of triumph may be succeeded by one of undue depression and sorrowful disappointment. And thus it was with David. He had obtained this great moral victory; but his circumstances were still unchanged. Saul yet continued to be king of Israel: himself remained a persecuted outcast. As the period, when he had before spared the life of Saul, had been followed by days of lengthened sorrow, so he probably anticipated an indefinite prolongation of similar sufferings, and his heart quailed at the prospect" (B.W. Newton).

Solemn is it to mark the contrast between what is found at the close of 1 Samuel 26 and that which is recorded in the opening verses of the next chapter. To question the faithfulness and goodness of God is fearful wickedness, though there are some who regard it as a very trivial offense; in fact, there are those who wellnigh exalt the doubts and fears of Christians into fruits and graces, and evidences of great advancement in spiritual experience. It is sad indeed to find a certain class of men petting and pampering people in unbelief and distrust of God, and being in this matter unfaithful both to their Master and to the souls of His saints. Not that we are an advocate of smiting the feeble of the flock, but their *sins* we must denounce. Any teaching which causes Christians to pity themselves for their failings and falls, is evil, and to deny that doubting the loving kindness of God is a very heinous offense, is highly reprehensible.

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul: there is nothing better for me than that I should speedily escape into the land of the Philistines" (1 Sam. 27:1). "And yet the hour of Saul's fall and of his own deliverance was close at hand. The Lord was about to interfere, and to extricate His faithful servant from his long and sore afflictions. Almost the very last hour of his trial under Saul had come, yet at that last moment he failed: so hard is it for 'patience to have her *perfect* work.' David had just said, '*Let the Lord* deliver me out of all tribulation.' It was a strong, and no doubt a sincere expression of confidence in God; but the feeling of the heart, as well as the expression of the lips, may often exceed the reality of our spiritual strength, and therefore, not unfrequently, when strong expressions have been used, they who have used them are tested by some peculiar trial; that so, if there be weakness, it may be detected, and no flesh glory in the presence of God" (B.W. Newton).

"And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day by the hand of Saul." Such a

conclusion was positively erroneous. There was *no evidence in proof* thereof: he had been placed in perilous positions before, but God had never deserted him. His trials had been many and varied, but God had always made for him “a way to escape” (1 Cor. 10:13). It was therefore *contrary to the evidence*. Once he had said, “Thy servant slew both the lion and the bear: and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be as one of them” (1 Sam. 17:36). Why not reason like that now? and say, “Thy servant slew Goliath, was delivered from the javelin of a madman, escaped the evil devices of Doeg, and so he shall continue to escape out of the hand of Saul!” Moreover, David’s rash conclusion was *contrary to promise*: Samuel had poured upon his head the anointing oil of God’s earnest that he should be king—how then could he be slain by Saul?

How is David’s unbelief to be accounted for? “First, because he was a man. The best of men are men at the best, and man at his best is such a creature that well might David himself say, ‘Lord what is man?’ . . . If faith never gave place to unbelief, we might be tempted to lift up the believer into a demigod, and think him something more than mortal. That we might see that a man full of faith is still a man, that we might glory in infirmities, since by them the power of God is the more clearly proved; therefore God was pleased to let the feebleness of man grievously show itself. As it was not David who achieved those former victories, but *God’s grace in David*; and now, when that is removed for a moment, see what Israel’s champion becomes!

“Second, David had been exposed to a very long trial; not for one week, but for month after month, he had been hunted like a partridge, upon the mountains. Now a man could bear one trial, but a perpetuity of tribulations is very hard to bear. . . . Such was David’s trial: always safe but always harassed; always secure through God, but always hunted about by his foe. No place could give him any ease. If he went into Keilah, then the citizens would deliver him up; if he went into the woods of Ziph, then the Ziphites betrayed him; if he went even to the priest of God, there was that dog of a Doeg to go to Saul, and accuse the priest; even in Engedi or in Adullam he was not secure; secure, I grant you, in God, but always persecuted by his foe. Now, this was enough to make the wise man mad, and to make the faithful man doubt. Do not judge too harshly of David; at least judge just as harshly of yourselves.

“Third, David had passed through some strong excitements of mind. Just a day or so before he had gone forth with Abishai in the moonlight to the field where Saul and his hosts lay sleeping. They passed the outer circle where the common soldiers lay, and quietly and stealthily the two heroes passed without awakening any. They came at last to the spot where the captains of the hundreds slept, and they trod over their slumbering bodies without arousing them. They reached the spot where Saul lay, and David had to hold back Abishi’s hand from slaying him; so he escaped from this temptation, as he had aforetime. Now, brethren, a man may do these great things helped by God, but do you know it is a sort of natural law with us, that after a strong excitement, *there is a reaction!* It was thus with Elijah after his victory over the prophets of Baal: later, he ran from Jezebel, and cried ‘Let me die.’

“But there was another reason, for we are not to exculpate David. He sinned, and that not merely through infirmity, but through evil of heart. It seems to us that David had *restrained prayer*. In every other action of David you find some hint that he asked counsel of the Lord . . . But this time what did he talk with? Why, with the most deceitful thing he could have found—with his own heart . . . Having restrained prayer, he did the fool’s act:

he forgot his God, he looked only at his enemy, and it was no wonder that when he saw the strength of the cruel monarch, and the pertinacity of his persecution, he said 'I shall one day fall before him.' Brothers and sisters, would you wish to hatch the egg of unbelief till it turns into a scorpion? Restrain prayer! Would you see evils magnified and mercies diminish? would you find your tribulations increased sevenfold and your faith diminished in proportion? Restrain prayer!" (Condensed from C.H. Spurgeon).

"I shall now perish one day." Ah, has not this been the cry of many a Satan-harassed saint! He looks within and sees what God has done for him: that he has desires and aspirations which he never had before conversion, so that the things he once hated he now loves. He realizes there has been a radical change, such as mere nature could not possibly effect, and his spirit rejoices in the hope set before him. *But* he also sees so very much corruption within him, and finds so much weakness that aids and abets that corruption; he sees temptations and sore trials awaiting him, and cold despondency falls upon his heart, and doubts and questions vex his mind. He is tripped up and has a bad fall, and then Satan roars in his ear, "Now God has forsaken thee," and he is almost ready to sink into despair.

"And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath" (1 Sam. 27:2). Under the pressure of trial, *relief* is what the flesh most desires, and unless the mind be stayed upon God, there is grave danger of seeking to take things into our own hands. Such was the case with David: having leaned unto his own understanding, being occupied entirely with the things of sight and sense, he now sought relief in his own way, and followed a course which was the very opposite to that which the Lord had enjoined him (1 Sam. 22:5). There God had told him to depart from the land of Moab and go into the land of Judah, and there He had marvelously preserved him. How this shows us what poor weak creatures the best of us are, and how low our graces sink when the Spirit does not renew them!

In what is here before us (v. 2), we are shown the ill effects of David's unbelief. "First, it made him do a foolish thing; the same foolish thing which he had rued once before. Now we say a burnt child always dreads the flame; but David had been burnt, and yet, in his unbelief, he puts his hand into the same fire again. He went once to Achish, king of Gath, and the Philistines identified him, and being greatly afraid, David feigned himself mad in their hands, and they drove him away. Now he goes to the same Achish again! Yes, and mark it, my brethren, although you and I know the bitterness of sin, yet if we are left to our own unbelief, we shall fall into the same sin again. I know we have said, 'No; never, never; I know so much by experience what an awful thing this is.' Your experience is not worth a rush to you apart from the continual restraints of grace. If your faith fail, everything else goes down with it; and you hoary-headed professor, will be as big a fool as a very boy, if God lets you along.

"Second, he went over to the Lord's enemies. Would you have believed it: he that killed Goliath, sought a refuge in Goliath's land; he who smote the Philistines trusts in the Philistines; nay, more, he who was Israel's champion, becomes the chamberlain to Achish, for Achish said, 'Therefore will I make thee keeper of my head forever,' and David became thus the captain of the body-guard of the king of Philistia, and helped preserve the life of one who was the enemy of God's Israel. Ah, if we doubt God, we shall soon be numbered among God's foes. Inconsistency will win us over into the ranks of His enemies, and they will be saying, 'What do these Hebrews have?' 'The just shall live

by faith, but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him’—the two sentences are put together as if the failure of our faith would surely lead to a turning back to sin.

“Third, he was on the verge of still worse sin—of overt acts of warfare against the Lord’s people. David’s having become the friend of Achish, when Achish went to battle against Israel, he said to him, ‘Know thou assuredly, that thou shalt go with me to battle, thou and thy men’; and David professed his willingness to go. We believe it was only a feigned willingness; but then, you see, we convict him again of falsehood. . . . It is true that God interposed and prevented him fighting against Israel, but this was no credit to David, for you know, brethren, we are guilty of a sin, even if we do not commit it, if we are willing to commit it. The last effect of David’s sin was this: it brought him into great trial” (C.H. Spurgeon).

O my readers, what a solemn, solemn, warning is all of this for our hearts! How it shows us the wickedness of unbelief and the fearful fruits which that evil root produces. It is true that David had no reason to trust Saul, but he had every reason to continue trusting God. But alas, unbelief is the sin of all others which doth so easily beset us. It is inherent in our very nature, and it is more impossible to root it out by any exertions of ours, than it is to change the features of our countenances. What need is there for us to cry daily, “Lord, I believe; help *Thou* mine unbelief” (Mark 9:24). Let me see in David myself, my very nothingness. O to fully realize that in our best moments we can never trust ourselves too little, nor God too much.

“And David arose, and he passed over with the six hundred men that were with him unto Achish, the son of Maach, king of Gath” (v. 2). Here we see David not only forsaking the path of duty, but joining interests with the enemies of God: this we must never do; no, not even for self-preservation, or out of care for our family. As another has said, “It is in one sense, a very easy matter to get out of the place of trial; but then we get out of the place of blessing also.” Such is generally, if not always the case, with the children of God. No matter how sore the trial, how pressing our circumstances, or how acute our need, to “rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for Him” (Psa. 37:7), is not only the course which most honours Him, but which, in the long run, spares us much great confusion and trouble which results when *we* seek to extricate ourselves.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household” (v. 3). David’s circumstances upon entering into Gath this time were very different from what they had been on a previous occasion (1 Sam. 21:10-15): then he entered secretly, now openly; then as a person unknown, now as the recognized enemy of Israel’s king; then alone, now with six hundred men; then he was driven hence, now he probably had been invited thither. Apparently he met with a kindly reception—probably because the king of Gath now hoped to use him in his own service: either that he could employ David against Israel, or secure an advantageous alliance with him, if ever he came to the throne. Thus the plan of David appeared to meet with success: at last he found a quiet dwelling-place. Providence seemed to be smiling upon him, and none but an anointed eye could have discerned otherwise.

“And David dwelt with Achish at Gath, he and his men, every man with his household, even David with his two wives, Ahinoam the Jezreelitess, and Abigail the Carmelitess, Nabal’s wife” (v. 3). Ah, has not the Holy Spirit supplied the key (in the second half of this verse) which explains to us David’s sad lapse. It was his “*two* wives” which

had displeased the Lord! We entitled the last article but one David's "chastening" and sought to point out the connection between what is found at the end of 1 Samuel 25 and that which is recorded in 1 Samuel 26, namely, the renewed attack of Saul upon him. That Divine "chastening" was now continued, and may be discerned by the spiritual eye in a variety of details.

In this article we have sought to show the awfulness of unbelief, and the evil character of the fruits that issue from it; and how that the graces of the strongest Christian soon become feeble unless they are renewed by the Spirit. But let it now be pointed out that God does not act capriciously in this: if our graces be not renewed, the fault lies in ourselves. It is by working backward from effect to cause, that we may here learn the most important lesson of all. (1) David sinned grievously in seeking refuge among the enemies of the Lord. (2) He went to them without having sought Divine guidance. (3) He leaned unto his own understanding, and reasoned that it was best for him to go to Gath. (4) He acted thus because he had given way to unbelief. (5) He gave way to unbelief because his faith was not Divinely renewed and prayer in him had been choked. (6) His faith was not renewed because *the Holy Spirit was grieved over his sin!* Re-read these six points in their inverse order!—A.W.P.

Dispensationalism

4. *The Israel of God* (Concluded).

(We feel that an apology is almost due some of our readers for continuing this present series at such length, and of discussing each aspect of the subject in such detail; but we are constrained so to do, for the sake of another class who sorely need them. Please pray that it may please God to use these particular articles in dispersing the mists of error from many minds.)

We resume at the point where we left off in our last article. In Romans 9:6, 7, the Apostle enunciates a principle which it is highly important for us to heed: failure to do so must only lead to a misunderstanding of the greater part of the Old Testament. That principle simply stated is, that God had an election *within* an election: that while the nation of Israel as such were His peculiar people, separated from all other nations, and favoured with great privileges, yet only a predestinated remnant of them had been chosen unto salvation and ordained to spend eternity in Heaven. Each member of that chosen remnant was, in God's appointed time, regenerated and sanctified by the operations of the Holy Spirit, was endowed with a "new nature" and spiritual faith. These, and these alone, were the real "children of promise," and these were adumbrated by Isaac—born after Ishmael was set aside by God, born according to His promise, born by His miracle-working power.

This great fact was quite unknown unto the carnal Jews, and hence we find them, at the beginning of the New Testament, hotly opposing the Gospel message. *They* were not "lost" sinners, "dead in trespasses," needing to be born again. Why no (in their estimation), they were already the children of God, had Abraham to their father, and were "just persons, which need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). *Theirs* were the covenants, *theirs* were the promises, *theirs* was the Messiah. Consequently, when the Messiah did come, and called upon them to "repent" (Matt. 4:17), and presented Himself as the One who had come to "seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10), they despised and rejected Him, and ultimately crucified Him as a blaspheming impostor. It was *this* spirit which Paul had to contend with, most of all when the Judaisers sought to corrupt his converts. Much in his Epistles can only be rightly understood in the light of this fact.

In our last article we pointed out how that when the Apostle said, "For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel" (Rom. 9:6), he meant, The entire posterity of Jacob are not commensurate with the real and spiritual "Israel." Then he added, "Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called" (v. 7). The great error of the carnal Jews was that they thought they were the children of God by virtue of their being the descendants of Abraham. But the grand promise given to Abraham was not made to all his progeny in general, but to himself and a particular "seed." As the descendants of Abraham, they were all indeed in one sense the children of God, for He said to Pharaoh, with reference to them, "Let My *son* go" (Exo. 4:23): "but the *natural* sonship was only a figure of the *spiritual* sonship of all believers of every nation" (Robert Haldane).

The principle affirmed here by the Apostle was no invention of his for the purpose of silencing his opponents, but was one which had been illustrated from the beginning of God's dispensations in reference to the Abrahamic family: the principle of restricting promises, couched in general terms, to a particular class of those to whom they might seem to refer. In proof thereof the Apostle quotes from the plain words of Jehovah to

Abraham (recorded in Genesis 21:12), “In Isaac shall thy seed be called”—Ishmael was passed by, as were all the sons which he had later by Keturah. And it is very evident from Galatians 4:28 that Isaac, the child “of promise,” was a type of all the elect, redeemed, and regenerated people of God.

In these verses of Romans 9 the Apostle was but amplifying and proving what he had declared earlier in the Epistle: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28, 29). He who was a “Jew” *outwardly*, was one that was such merely by name, nature, and nationality; but he who was a “Jew” *inwardly*, was one that had been a subject of an internal work of grace; the one had the law of God in his hand, the other in his heart. The true and spiritual “Jew”—in contrast from those which are “Jews *by nature*” (Gal. 2:15)—is one whose excellency is inward, seen and acknowledged by God alone.

A parallel passage to the one last before us is found in Philippians 3:3, “For *we are the circumcision*, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus.” What could possibly be plainer than this? and in the light of it who dares to deny that there *are* two kinds of “Israelites,” two kinds of “Jews,” two kinds of “circumcision,” a natural and a spiritual, and that in the New Testament the Holy Spirit Himself has appropriated and applied unto Christians the same names under which the saints were known by in Old Testament times. In the previous verse the Apostle had warned the Philippian saints against the Judaisers, “Beware of the concision,” a term which signifies “cutters off”; but Christians he designates, “the circumcision,” not because they were the lineal descendants of the Patriarchs, but because by faith they enjoyed all the spiritual privileges of God’s ancient people.

Circumcision was the seal of the covenant of God. It was a mark of identification and the sign of separation. The spiritual import of circumcision was plainly taught in the Old Testament: “Circumcise therefore the foreskin of *your heart*, and be no more stiffnecked” (Deut. 10:16); “And the LORD thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the LORD thy God” (Deut. 30:6); “Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, and take away the foreskins of your heart” (Jer. 4:4). By circumcision the Jew professed to cut off from his heart every carnal thought and affection, in order that henceforth he might serve God in spirit and in truth, devoting himself to Him alone, putting all his trust in Him. The same is true of the real Christian: see Galatians 5:24, Colossians 2:11.

The circumcising of the Jewish babe on the eighth day foreshadowed the dedicating of himself to God of the babe in Christ. It also signified the removal of our natural hardness of heart, the iniquity of it (by the Spirit’s conviction) being laid open to our view, which is accompanied by pain or contrition for sin and shame because of it. Thus, when the Apostle affirms of Christians, “we are the circumcision” he means *we* have the spiritual substance and reality of which the fleshly Israel had only the name and sign; just as when the Lord Jesus said, “Whosoever shall do the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother” (Matt. 12:50). He signified that He holds them in that relationship, He loves them and feels for them.

“One shall say, I am the Lord’s; and another shall call himself by the name of Jacob; and another shall subscribe with his hand unto the LORD, and surname himself by the name of Israel” (Isa. 44:5). Here is a remarkable prophecy which announced centuries

beforehand the very thing for which we are contending in this article, namely that the New Testament saints should be known by *the same names* as were the Old Testament believers. Since it is highly probable that the attention of very few of our readers has ever been seriously directed unto this passage, let us take a closer, though brief, look at the same.

The above prophecy begins at verse 1 of Isaiah 44, and is addressed unto that remnant from among the Jews which is “according to the election of grace,” to a spiritual “Israel” among the nation of Israel. To that favoured remnant the Lord promises an affusion or outpouring of His Spirit, see verse 3: note very carefully that the figurative expressions which are found in the first half of that verse are definitely explained in the second half—this supplies a most valuable key to the understanding of many passages in the Prophets, wherein God promises to give “water” etc., but which the gross materialists of our day carnalize, instead of viewing spiritually. Then in verse 4 we are shown the blessed effects of this outpouring of the Spirit which occurred on the day of Pentecost. Verse 5 gives us the success of the Apostolic ministry among the Gentiles, who were not called by the name Israel, but who would now reckon themselves of the posterity of Jacob in a *spiritual* sense and Israelites “indeed”!

“Doubtless it looks farther yet, to the conversion of the Gentiles, and the multitudes of them which, upon the effusion of the Spirit after Christ’s ascension, should be joined to the Lord, and added to the Church. These converts are ‘one and another’: very many, of different ranks and nations, and all welcome to God: Colossians 3:11. When one doth it, another shall, by his example, be invited to do it, and then another. First, they shall resign themselves to God. Not one in the name of the rest, but every one for himself shall say, ‘I am the Lord’s’: He has an incontestable right to rule me, and I submit to Him, to all His commands, to all His disposals; I am and will be His only, His wholly, His forever. Second, they shall incorporate themselves with the people of God, ‘call themselves by the name of Jacob,’ forgetting their own people and their father’s house, and desirous to wear the character and the livery of God’s family. They shall love all God’s people, shall associate with them, give them the right hand of fellowship, etc. Third, they shall do this very solemnly, they ‘shall subscribe with their hand unto the Lord,’ as for the confirming of a bargain a man sets his hand to it, and delivers it as his act and deed” (Matthew Henry).

Another Old Testament prophecy which announced the same blessed truth is found in Jeremiah 31:31, “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah.” The “days come” refer to the Christian dispensation, as is unequivocally established by the Apostle’s application of this passage in Hebrews 8:8-12. The “new covenant” (cf. Luke 22:20, 2 Cor. 3:6) is in contrast from the Mosaic covenant. The houses of Israel and Judah are to be understood mystically, as including all who are “fellow citizens with the saints, and of the Household of God” (Eph. 2:19), the middle wall of partition being broken down. “Who the persons are with whom this covenant is made: ‘the house of Israel and Judah,’ that is, *with the Gospel church*, the Israel of God, on which peace shall rest (Gal. 6:16); with the spiritual seed of believing Abraham, and praying Jacob. Judah and Israel had been two separate kingdoms, but were united after their return, in the joint favours God bestowed upon them; so Jews and Gentiles are one in the Gospel church and covenant” (Matthew Henry).

Still another Old Testament prophecy announcing the same thing is found in Hosea 1:10, "Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered; and it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God." How many have been taught (the writer included) that this has reference to God's future dealings with carnal Israel; but the New Testament makes it unmistakably plain that it is God's elect *among the Gentiles*, those belonging to the spiritual "Israel," who are here in view. In Romans 9:24 Paul says, "Even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles," which he proves with "As He saith also in Osee, [Hosea] I will call them My people, which were not My people; and her beloved, which was not beloved. And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people; there shall they be called the children of the living God" (Rom 9:25, 26). "It is certain that this promise (Hosea 1:10) had its accomplishment in the setting up of the kingdom of Christ, by the preaching of the Gospel, and the bringing in both of Jews and Gentiles to it; for to this these words are applied by Paul and Peter (1 Peter 2:10). 'Israel' here is *the Gospel church*, the spiritual Israel" (Matthew Henry).

"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1 Peter 2:9, 10). It is of great importance that we should recognize that the Old Testament abounds in *typical* promises and prophecies. The various appellations which are here given to Christians, are borrowed from the descriptive names used of the nation of Israel under a former dispensation, and belong to the people of God under a new economy, in a far higher sense and with a much deeper meaning than they had of old. The New Testament Church is the *antitype* of Israel at Sinai. The language of 1 Peter 2:10 was another reference to Hosea 1:10. Carnal Israel having proved unfaithful, all its spiritual privileges have been transferred to the New Testament church: *see* Matthew 21:43!

"In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old: That they may possess the remnant of Edom, and of all the heathen, which are called by My name, saith the LORD that doeth this" (Amos 9:11, 12). We are not left to guess at the meaning of this prophecy, for its terms are infallibly explained to us in the New Testament. After Peter had related to the church at Jerusalem how that the Holy Spirit had been poured out upon the household of Cornelius, James affirmed, "Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit *the Gentiles*, to take out of them a people for His name. *And to this agree* the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom My name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things" (Acts 15:14-17).

"David's tabernacle was to be rebuilt, and his kingdom restored by the Messiah, but in a *spiritual* way, for the 'tabernacle of David' designs the spiritual kingdom or church of Christ. . . . 'And I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up,' which has been done by breaking down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile, and letting in the latter into the Gospel church with the former. . . . 'That the residue of men

might seek after the Lord,' the Builder and Proprietor of this tabernacle, and who dwells in it; that is, attend His worship, pray unto Him, and seek unto Him for life and salvation. In Amos those are called 'the remnant of Edom,' and design the remnant according to the election of grace among the Gentiles—the Jews generally call all other nations, and especially the Roman empire, Edom" (John Gill).

We trust sufficient has now been said to convince every candid reader that the name "Israel" is often used in the Old Testament in a *mystical* sense, as well as a literal; and that there are *spiritual* "Jews" as well as carnal ones. When the Lord said to the woman *of Canaan* (testing her faith), "I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 15:24), He certainly did not mean that He had been sent only unto the fleshly descendants of Jacob, for unto some *of them* He said, "But ye believe not, because ye are *not* of My *sheep*" (John 10:26). No, it was unto the lost sheep of the mystical or spiritual "house of Israel" that He was sent. The *spiritual* "Israel" is also in view in such passages as John 1:31; Acts 5:31; 13:23; 28:20, namely that "Israel" whom the Father elected, the Son redeemed, and the Spirit regenerates. O what praise is due unto His sovereign grace, if writer and reader belong to "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16).—A.W.P.

Heart Work

We now resume at the point where we left off in our last article.

Second, it is of great efficacy to keep the heart from sinking under affliction, to call to mind that our own *Father* has the ordering of them: not a creature can move either hand or tongue against us, but by His permission. Suppose the cup be a bitter one which He has given thee to drink, still there is no poison in it. Hath not God said, "I will do you no hurt" (Jer. 25:6)! If you be really one of His children thou liest too near Him to injure thee. Thy highest good is ever before Him, and though He spares not the rod when we need it, yet it is *love* which wields it (Heb. 12:6). Suppose a faithful and tender-hearted physician had studied well the case of a patient, and had prescribed the most excellent remedies to spare his life; would he not be grieved to hear him cry out "you have poisoned me," because it gripes and pains him in the operation? Quell then those groundless and unreasonable suspicions of the designs of the Great Physician.

Third, though God hath reserved unto Himself the right to afflict His people, yet He has pledged Himself not to take His lovingkindness from them: "If his children forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments; If they break My statutes, and keep not My commandments; Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless My lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him, nor suffer My faithfulness to fail" (Psa. 89:30-33). Can I look that Scripture in the face with a murmuring or repining spirit? O naughty heart! doest thou well to be discontented when God hath given thee the whole tree, with all its clusters of comfort, because He suffers the wind to blow down a few leaves! Christians have both spiritual blessings and temporal mercies, the one abiding, the other movable: since God has eternally secured the former, never let thy heart be troubled at the loss of the latter.

Fourth, may it not be that by these humbling providences God is now accomplishing that for which you have long prayed and waited for? If so, is it not foolish to be worried over the same? You have asked Him to refine your soul, to conform you more unto the image of Christ, to deliver you from the power of sin, to discover unto you the emptiness and insufficiency of the creature, to so mortify your worldly and fleshly lusts that you might find all your enjoyment and satisfaction in Christ. Then by these impoverishing strokes God is now fulfilling thy desires. Wouldst thou be delivered from temptation? then He has hedged up thy way with thorns. Wouldst thou see the vanity of the creature? He has now revealed it to thy experience. Wouldst thou have thy corruptions mortified? He has taken away the food and fuel that maintained them. As prosperity begat and fed them, so adversity, when sanctified, is a means to kill them. Wouldst thou have thy heart rest in the bosom of God? He has pulled from under thy head the soft pillow of creature-delights on which before you rested!

Finally, if like Rebekah of old, thou still refuseth to be comforted or quieted, then consider one thing more, which if it be seriously pondered will doubtless still thy soul. Compare the condition you are now in, and with which thou art so much dissatisfied, with that of the damned! Some of those you used to associate and make merry with are now wailing and gnashing their teeth under the scourge of Divine vengeance. They are roaring amid the unquenchable flames of Hell; and deservedst not *thou* to be among them! O my friend, your present lot, no matter how unpleasant it be, cannot for a moment be compared with theirs. How gladly would they change places with you. Let the knowledge that your sins deserved eternal torment make you thank God heartily for a crust of

bread and a cup of water.

3. *In times of Public Danger.* We do not wish to be an alarmist, or needlessly excite the fear of our readers, but judging from God's ways in the past, it would seem quite likely that social upheavals, and the menacing of property and life, are not far distant. We say this, not merely because of the discontent which is now seething within the lower and rougher elements, nor because that tens of thousands, feeling so severely the pinch of poverty, are being driven to the point of desperation, but because so very few professing Christians have yet humbled themselves beneath the mighty hand of God, and evidenced any godly sorrow for their past extravagances, or show any marked reformation in their lives today. One wonders how much distress and suffering it will take before the haughty are humbled, and before those who are lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God will give Him the place which is His right in their hearts and lives.

There can be no social revolution, no setting at defiance of established law and order, while the restraining hand of God curbs the wilder passions of men. The Almighty has perfect control of all His creatures, and therefore His people are bidden to pray "for kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may *lead a quiet and peaceable life* in all godliness and honesty" (1 Tim. 2:2)—such a petition would be useless were not the helm of all events held by the hand of the Lord. And it is for the sake of His own elect that God prevents the reprobate from turning this world into bedlum and shambles. But if His own people have wandered so far from Him as not to have His ear, if they will not repent of and turn away from their wicked ways now that His chastening hand is lightly laid upon them, then He will most probably resort to far sterner measures, and *force them to their knees.*

He who reads with any degree of attention the history of Israel, especially that portion of it recorded in the book of Judges, will see that God had to employ drastic means to turn them from their idols. So too he who has any fair acquaintance with the history of the "Christian" nations of Europe during the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, will discover there several solemn illustrations of the same principle. And it seems to the writer that something more than an industrial depression, something more than financial straitness and flu epidemics, will be required to bring to an end the present frightful desecration of the Holy Sabbath, the brazen immodesty which stalks through the land, the spirit of lawlessness which abounds on every side. God may soon unleash the hounds of anarchy! Suppose He does: that would be another critical hour wherein we would need to exercise special care over our hearts. "Hear for the time to come" (Isa. 42:23)!

In times of danger and public distraction the stoutest souls are apt to be surprised by slavish fear. When there are ominous signs in the heavens, and on earth distress of nations, with perplexity, then the hearts of men fail them for fear, and the looking after those things which are coming on the earth (Luke 21:25, 26). But it should not be thus with the saints: they ought to be of a more raised spirit. Those who are walking with God, may say "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. *Therefore will not we fear,* though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea; Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled" (Psa. 46:1-3). With David they will exclaim, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" (Psa. 27:1). How, then, may a Christian preserve his heart from distracting and tormenting fears in times of great or threatening danger?

First, even then *all* creatures are in the directing hand of God, and can only move as *He* permits them. Let this truth be well settled by faith in the heart, and it will have a marvelous quieting effect upon it. A lion at large is a terrible creature to meet, but not so when he is in the keeper's hand. Dreadful indeed will it be if a time of Bolshevism should break loose in this land, but even so He who rules Heaven and earth shall say, "Thus far shalt thou come, and no further." Even then, my brother or sister, God would still be your *Father*, and much more tender toward you than you are unto yourself. Let me ask the most nervous woman whether there would not be a vast difference between a drawn sword in the hand of a bloody ruffian, and the same sword in the hand of a loving husband? As great a difference is there in looking upon creatures by an eye of sense, and looking on them as in the hand of your God by an eye of faith.

Second, urging upon yourself the express prohibitions of Christ in this case, and let thy soul stand in awe of the violation of them. The Son of God has charged you, "When ye shall hear of wars *and commotions*, be not terrified" (Luke 21:9); then cry unto Him for supernatural grace to obey. "In nothing terrified by your adversaries" (Phil. 1:28). Three times over in Matthew 10:26-31 Christ commands us *not to fear* "men." Does the voice of a creature make thee tremble, and shall not the voice of God. If thou art of such a timorous spirit, how is it that thou fearest not to disobey the plain commands of Christ? Surely *His* word should have more power to calm thee than the voice of a poor worm of the earth to terrify. "I, even I, am He that comforteth you: who art thou, that thou shouldst be afraid of a man that shall die?" (Isa. 51:12).

Third, consult the many precious promises which are recorded for your support and comfort in all dangers: these are the refuges to which you may fly and be safe. There are particular promises suited to particular cases and exigencies. "Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the LORD, which is my refuge, even the Most High, thy habitation; There shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways" (Psa. 91:5-11). "Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee" (Isa. 43:1, 2).

Finally, make sure of the eternal interest of thy soul in the hands of Jesus Christ: when *that* is done, then you may say, Now world do thy worst. You will not be very solicitous about a vile body, when you know that it shall be well to all eternity with your precious soul. "And I say unto you My friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do" (Luke 12:4). If you are truly and Scripturally assured that your spirit will be received by Christ into an everlasting habitation the moment of its dismissal from the body, trouble not yourself about the instruments and means of its dismissal. "O but a violent death is terrible to nature"! But what matter is it when thy soul is in Heaven whether it be let out at thy mouth or thy throat? whether thy familiar friends or barbarous enemies close thy dead eyes? Thy soul in Heaven shall not be conscious of how thy body is abused on earth.

Fourth, in times of Zion's trouble it behooves public and tender hearts to be delivered from sinking into despondency and despair. When we see the once fair gardens of the Church, with their hedges broken down, the boar running wild therein, the flowers replaced by weeds, it makes a godly soul cry, "Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears" (Jer. 9:1). Yes, but remember, no trouble befalls Zion, but by the permission of Zion's God, and He permits nothing out of which He will not bring much good at last. Moreover, "there *must be* also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest" (1 Cor. 11:19). Again, lay hold of and persistently plead before God His promise: "When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him" (Isa. 59:19). However low the Church may be plunged under the waters of adversity, it shall assuredly rise again.

Fifth, how may a Christian keep his heart from *revengeful motives* under the greatest injuries and abuses of men? First, urge upon thy soul the express commands of God: remember that this is forbidden fruit, no matter how pleasant to our vitiated appetites. Revenge is sweet, says nature; the effects thereof shall be bitter, says God. How plainly has God prohibited this flesh-pleasing sin: "Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work" (Prov. 24:29); "Avenge not yourselves" (Rom. 12:19). But that is not all: "If thine enemy be hungry, give him bread to eat; and if he be thirsty, give him water to drink" (Prov. 25:21). One of the many proofs of the supernatural origin of the Scriptures is that they forbid revenge which is so sweet to nature. Then awe thy heart by the authority of God in those Scriptures.

Second, set before thy soul the blessed and binding example of Christ: never did any suffer more and greater abuses from men than did the Saviour, and never was any one so peaceful and forgiving: "When He was reviled, reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not; but committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23). To be of a meek and gracious spirit is to be Christ-like. Third, calm thy heart by the realization that by revenge thou dost but satisfy a lust, but by forgiving thou shalt conquer a lust. Again; consider more frequently how often you wrong God, and then you will not be so easily enflamed against those who wrong thee. Do you still reply, But such insults and injustices are more than flesh and blood can stand? then earnestly seek *supernatural* grace.

Sixth, how may a Christian preserve his heart from utterly sinking in seasons of spiritual gloom and the hidings of God's face? Turn unto the cheering promises which God has left on record for His backslidden people: Jeremiah 3:22, Hosea 14:4, etc. No matter what your sin or trouble be, let it drive you *to* God, and not from Him: cry with David, "Pardon mine iniquity; for it is great" (Psa. 25:11). But suppose I can obtain no access to God, no conscious help from His Spirit, and find no ray of hope for my poor heart? Then heed this word, "Who is among you that feareth the LORD, that obeyeth the voice of His servant, that walketh in darkness, and *hath no light*? let him trust in the name of the LORD, and stay upon his God" (Isa. 50:10).

Seventh, how may the Christian, in a time of critical illness, get his heart loose from all earthly engagements and *persuade it unto a willingness to die*? First, by reminding himself that death has lost its sting (1 Cor. 15:55) and cannot harm him. Second, by considering what heavy burdens he will then be rid of. The soul pays a dear rent for the house it now lives in! But death frees the saint not only from all the troubles and trials of this life, not only from all the sufferings and pains of the body, but it delivers from all

spiritual diseases—”he that is dead is freed from sin” (Rom. 6:7). Justification destroys its damning power, sanctification its reigning power, but glorification its very being and existence. At death the Christian is done forever with Satan and his temptations: then how heartily should he welcome it!—A.W.P.

(For much in this article we are indebted to the works of the Puritan, John Flavel.)

Hearing the Rod

(Micah 6:9)

“Man is born unto trouble, as the sparks fly upward” (Job 5:7). How can it be otherwise, living as he is in a world which is under the curse that Adam’s sin entailed, and, what is worse, under God’s judgment because of its casting out of His beloved Son. Yet the subject of “trouble” needs to be “rightly divided” if we are to properly heed that exhortation, “Be ye not unwise, but *understanding* what the will of the Lord is” (Eph. 5:17), an important part of which consists in understanding the meaning and message of our Father to us in all the “trouble” which we encounter and experience.

As we turn to the Holy Scriptures for light upon this subject of Trouble, Suffering, Affliction, Tribulation, Persecution, etc., we discover two distinct and different lines of Truth thereon, running all through the Word. On the one hand we read that, “We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22), parallel with which are such passages as Luke 6:26, 2 Timothy 3:12, etc. But on the other hand, we read that “the curse causeless shall not come (Prov. 26:2), that God does not “afflict willingly” (Lam. 3:33), and that “if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged” (1 Cor. 11:31). Much of the “trouble” and “affliction” experienced by us, we bring upon ourselves, through our own folly. We see this plainly exemplified in the natural realm: how many are now suffering bodily ills through intemperate eating and drinking; how many are nervous wrecks as the result of “burning the candle at both ends”?

The same principle holds good in the spiritual realm: the chastening rod of God is upon many of His children because of their self-will and self-pleasing: some of them are passing through sore financial straits because their “sins have *withholden*” God’s temporal mercies (Jer. 5:25); still others, who have been favoured with clear and definite light from God as to a certain course of duty—e.g. separating themselves from religious associations which dishonour Christ—and because they have not *walked* therein, the Lord has “hedged up their way with *thorns*” (Hosea 2:6). Nevertheless, it would be a serious mistake to draw the inference that every time we see a suffering Christian, we behold one who has seriously displeased God, and therefore is now being severely chastised by Him. It would be wrong to form such a conclusion concerning *every* case, because trouble and suffering issue from *other* causes and are sent by God for other purposes than the reproof of sin—sent sometimes to experimentally fit the recipient for greater and higher usefulness in the service of Christ: compare 2 Corinthians 1:4.

Now from what has been pointed out above, it should be quite clear that real exercise of heart is called for from each one of us whenever painful trials come upon us; that we need to get down before God, and cry, “*show* me wherefore Thou contendest with me” (Job 10:2). To take *this* attitude is the part of wisdom, for *if* God be dealing with us over something that has displeased Him, and we fail to humble ourselves before Him and learn of Him *what* it is which is now choking the channel of His highest blessings toward us, and obtain grace from Him to put right what is wrong, then the chastening “profits” us not, and further and increased chastisement must be our portion: for it is not until we are “*exercised* thereby,” exercised *in conscience*, that we have any promise it *will* issue in “the peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

If the “trouble” through which we are passing at any period of our lives *be* a reproof from God because of our sins or unfaithfulness, and instead of *suspecting* that He *is* displeased with us and taking our place in the dust before Him, begging Him to put His fin-

ger on the festering sore in our hearts: if instead, we proudly imagine that there is *nothing* wrong in our lives, that we have given God no cause to smite us, and complacently assume that we are suffering *only* for “righteousness’ sake,” and draw comfort from such promises as Matthew 5:11, 12, we are deceived by Satan, and are but “*forsaking* our own mercy” (Jonah 2:8). It is written, “He that covereth his sins shall not prosper” (Prov. 28:13). Thus, whenever “trouble” comes upon a Christian it is *always* the safest policy to come to the Lord and say, “Teach me, and I will hold my tongue: and cause me to understand wherein I have erred” (Job 6:24).

From what has been said above, it will be seen that it often falls to the lot of God’s servants to perform a duty which is most unpleasant to the flesh. When they come into contact with a Brother or Sister who is passing through deep waters, their *natural* desire is to administer *comfort*, but in some instances (at least) to do so would be guilty of “healing also the hurt of the daughter of My people slightly”: and *how* is this done? The same verse tells us, by “saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace” (Jer. 6:14). That was what the “*false* prophets” had done to Israel, and *that* was the very thing which carnal Israel desired: their demand was, “Prophesy *not* unto us right things, speak unto us *smooth* things, prophesy deceits” (Isa. 30:10), and human nature has not changed since then!

It is the thankless task for any true servant of Christ today to be *faithful* to his Master, and faithful to the souls of those with whom he deals. Not that God requires him to think the *worst* of every case that comes to his notice, but that it is his bounden duty to exhort each one to act on Job 10:2. But if he does do so, he may be assured at the beginning, that in the majority of cases he will be looked upon as harsh, hypercritical, unkind, like one of Job’s censorious comforters; for there are few indeed who have an *honest* heart, are ready to know the worst about themselves, and are willing to be cut by the knife of God’s Word. The great majority want *only* comfort, the “promises” of Scripture, the message of “Peace, peace.”

But do not the Promises of God belong unto His children? Certainly they do: but here too “there is a season, and a time to every purpose” (Eccl. 3:1): there is a time when we may *rightfully* draw consolation and strength from the promises, and there is a time when we may *not* legitimately do so. When all is right between our souls and God, when every known sin has been confessed, *and* forsaken in sincere purpose of heart, then may we righteously draw milk from the breasts of Divine consolation. But just as there are times when it would be injurious for us to eat some of the things we do when we are well, so to take unto ourselves comfort from the Divine Promises while sin is cherished in our hearts, is baneful and sinful.

The above (now slightly revised) was recently sent by us in a letter to one passing through deep waters. It occurred to us that it might be a timely word for others. Many are now in the fiery furnace, and few indeed are there capable of speaking to them a word in season. It is not sufficient to bid them “Trust in God,” and assure them that brighter days are ahead. The *conscience* needs to be searched; the wound must be probed and cleansed before it is ready for the “balm of Gilead”; we must *humble ourselves* “under the mighty hand of God” (1 Peter 5:6), if we are to be exalted again by Him in “due time.” May the Lord be pleased to bless the above unto some of “his own”:—correspondence on spiritual matters welcome.—A.W.P.

Delusions Discovered

To the editors of the Gospel Standard: If you will bear with me, I will write a few of the feelings that have passed, from time to time, in my soul, and some little account of the way in which I hope the Lord has led me.

From a child, I seemed to have some kind of fear of God; so that I could not follow sin and wickedness as others, in external acts; and I was obliged to keep away from ungodly characters. Being a teacher in the Church of England school, I was obliged to teach the children the awful lies in their Catechism. Here I continued for some years, attending the church, and passing, in the eyes of many, for a Christian. I went amongst the Independents a little while, and was a strict hearer there. I was noticed by many of them as a very pious young man, and a child of God. Thus I heard their preachers, and thought them all dear men of God.

Hearing my mother, who is, I believe a gracious woman, converse with two of my sisters about the things of God; hearing her tell of her experience, how she had been bound down under the curse of the law for twelve years, expecting nothing but Hell; how she had envied the very beasts of the field, because they had no soul to appear before God; how she had gone to bed, many times, afraid to shut her eyes in sleep lest she should awake in Hell; and how the Lord had appeared to her, and washed away all her sins, by a blessed manifestation of pardon through the blood and righteousness of Christ made known to her soul; and hearing, also, a blessed account of the way in which the Lord led some of my sisters, I began to see that I knew nothing about real religion, and that the parson of the parish church bore no marks of a man of God; nor could I find any of the Church people, nor scarcely any among the Independents, or any of their preachers, near me, that could give an account of the real work of grace in their souls.

I afterwards attended a little chapel in the town, though the people who attended it were hated by the mere professors of religion. My mother being a member there, I became a constant hearer. The men who preached there appeared to me to be wonderful men. They preached eternal election, particular redemption, that salvation was all of grace, and that none could be saved but those that were everlastingly chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world. I felt a great pleasure in hearing these men, as they preached doctrinal truths very clearly from the letter of the Word, and much of the bright side of the experience of a child of God; and I was often melted down into tears under their preaching. I now became very zealous for the Truth, and could read my Bible from morning till night, and thought that I had a great insight into the Truth. I thought that I must be a child of God, because I was such a constant hearer of the Word preached, and had, as I thought, such wonderful zeal for God and for His Truth, and lived such a good life that no one could bring anything against my character. I continued, for some time, in this state; and passed, in the eyes of some of the children of God, as one that was born of God. I still increased in zeal and head-knowledge, until I thought myself almost fit to stand up in a pulpit.

Soon after this, it pleased the Lord to raise up a faithful servant and send him amongst us. I heard J.W., a real heart-searching minister. He began to pull down my false hopes and counterfeit religion, and drew a line of distinction, not only between the sheep and the goats, but a searching separation between a Calvinistic sheep and a Calvinistic goat, and opened up the delusions of the day. He said that a man may know all the doctrines of the Bible, and have a wonderful insight into them, so that he may preach and explain

them very clearly from the letter of the Word, yet never have a spark of grace in his soul; and that whatever a man's religion was, if he had never been brought down under the mighty hand of God, and never had the Law of God applied, more or less, with a supernatural power, to his conscience, nor had all his false hopes and false religion burned up and destroyed, nor been brought down a ruined wretch to the feet of Jesus, with groans, sighs, cries, and tears for a manifestation of pardon through the precious atoning blood of Christ made known to his soul by an inward experience, he will be lost to all eternity.

Hearing such things as these, Lord's Day after Lord's Day, for sometime, I began to see and feel things very differently from what I ever did before. I saw that I had never stepped one step in the path of life; that I had never possessed one grain of grace in my soul; that I had made lies my refuge, hid myself under false pretenses, and made an agreement with death, and a covenant with Hell; that I knew nothing of the Law, nor of the Gospel; that I had never been killed nor made alive, wounded nor healed, stripped nor clothed, made poor nor made rich; that I had never been brought down nor raised up; that I had a name to live, while my soul was dead before God, dead in sins, dead in a profession, and dead under the curse of God's righteous Law; yet knew it not, being blindfolded by the devil, and led captive at his will in a graceless profession. I saw that free will was no more than a spider's web to rest my never-dying soul upon, and that doctrines in the head, without grace, were no better. I saw that all my reading of the Bible and various religious books, all my attendance at places of worship from a child, all my zeal and head-knowledge, and all my prayers, were nothing but a mass of hypocrisy, deceit and self-righteousness. I saw that there were thousands in Hell that had gone as far as I had in a profession of religion, and yet had died under the wrath of God. O how my soul went out after God in sighs, and groans, and wrestlings, that He would show mercy to such a wretch as I!

I saw that the Lord would be just if He cut me off and sent me to Hell. And O how my very soul hated hypocrisy and the delusions of my past life! I many times begged the Lord to drag me, in my feelings, through the very belly of Hell, rather than let me live and die a hypocrite. O how my soul went out after the Lord in longing desires that He would appear as my God; that He would show mercy unto one so vile; and that He would lead me to Gethsemane, there to see, by precious faith, a slaughtered Jesus, bleeding for my transgressions and dying that I might live, and that by His death, I might have everlasting life beyond the grave. O that the Lord would apply these things to my conscience! O for one spark of Divine life in my soul! O for one grain of precious faith! O for one drop of atoning blood, and an interest in the justifying righteousness of Christ! I saw that the Commandment was exceedingly broad, and that I should soon enter the woeful abode of endless night, unless I were saved by the matchless grace of God, and a salvation brought home, applied, and made known to my soul by His mighty power. All my false hopes of Heaven, all my fleshly zeal, all my counterfeit faith and all my head-knowledge of the Word of God appeared to be nothing but delusion; and I felt myself, in some little measure, in my real state, a lost, ruined, perishing sinner, without hope and without help in myself, and a poor, naked, needy, guilty, bankrupt beggar, and that I must forever lie in Hell, under the wrath of a just God, unless I have an experimental knowledge of my eternal election and interest in the Person, life and death of Christ, so that my soul may not be found naked at the great and awful Day.

I feel assured that Christ died for all the elect, and no others; but this will not satisfy

my soul. I want a personal knowledge that *I* am one of the elect brought home to my soul with a living power, that I may know that I am born again of the blessed Spirit, by having His kingdom set up in my heart, so as to feel assured that He is my Lord and my God, and my everlasting portion beyond the grave. O Thou great, unchangeable God, when wilt Thou arise and shine into my soul, and bless me with this sweet hope in Thy mercy, that I may feel the precious atoning blood of Christ applied unto me? This is what my soul wants; this is what it longs for.

Sometimes I have felt my soul sweetly drawn out after the Lord, under the preaching of the Word, when the servant of the Lord has been led by the blessed Spirit to trace out the feelings of the poor, the outcast, the desolate, the needy, the hopeless, and the helpless in themselves; and I have gone into the fields, under the ricks of corn, and over the hills to some lonesome downs, where no human eye could see me, nor ear hear me, and poured out my soul unto the Lord, with cries and tears, that He would reveal Himself to my soul, and show me His dear hands, and feet, and side, that I might say with Thomas, "My Lord and my God"; and that He would say unto me, "Thy sins, which are many, are all forgiven." I exclaimed, "This is what I want. Do not be angry; but grant me my petition, O Lord! I feel that I shall be lost forever, unless I am saved in Thee with an everlasting salvation. I deserve not the least of all Thy mercies; I deserve nothing but Hell; and canst Thou, wilt Thou have mercy on such a wretch?" Thus I have in tears poured out the feelings of my soul unto the Lord, until my poor body has been wearied with the exercise of my soul, yet I have felt some sweetness in pouring out my soul unto Him, and have returned home with a "who can tell but the Lord may yet appear, and bless me with the pardon of all my sins?"

No preaching will do for me now, but such as is sound, searching, and experimental, and brought home with power to my soul. Christ in the letter, and a letter religion, will not do for me now. My soul seeks for realities, power, life, and feeling. Salvation felt, handled, and tasted in my soul is what I long to experience. Many times have I cried out in the language of David, "Search me, O God! and try me." I have asked the Lord to see whether I have any evil end in view, and supplicated Him to lead me in the way everlasting. I have begged Him to bring me to the light, and show unto me my real character and the very ground of my heart, that I might never be resting in a false hope, and never be building on a false foundation; but that I might be sifted and driven out of every refuge of lies, and be brought to the light, that I might have my real state opened to my view as I stand before God. O how I could bless and praise the matchless name of the Lord, that He hath not cut me off whilst I was a stranger to Him, in an ungodly profession; but that He had, in some little measure, opened my eyes to see, and my heart to feel the awful state in which I was!

Since I have felt these things, a secret hope sometimes rises up in my mind, that had the blessed Lord meant to destroy me, He would not have shown me those things; that He would not have implanted His fear in my soul, (as I hope He has), nor have brought me to see and feel all my righteousness, all my good works, and all my bad works, to be as filthy rags; and that He would not have caused me to groan and pant, long and sigh for the precious imputed righteousness and atoning blood of Christ to be applied to my soul. I have seen that all real religion was supernatural, and came from God, and from God alone; and that unless I had this real, vital religion brought with supernatural power into my conscience, and experimentally enjoyed the pardon of all my sins, by an internal

manifestation of the precious blood and righteousness of Christ by the Holy Spirit, I rested in a refuge of lies. O how my soul did long and pant after these things to be experimentally felt in my heart! What desire I have felt towards the blessed Redeemer! I have felt that I could leave father and mother, house and land, gold and silver, anything and everything that this world calls good or great; I felt that I could leave all for Christ's sake and die for His honour and glory, would He but manifest Himself to me.

Some times on a Lord's Day, the faithful servant of God has entered into the feeling of my soul in such a manner that I have been constrained to bless and praise the name of the Lord for sending such a one amongst us; one whose face was set as a flint, and who stood as an iron pillar and as a brazen wall against the deceitful religion of the day; one that has been led into the everlasting distinction between the elect and the reprobate; one that has separated the precious from the vile, cast up the high-way, and lifted up a standard to the people; one that had been experimentally led into the footsteps of the flock, and experimentally traced out the experience of gracious souls; and one that had been led into the deep things of God and deep soul-trouble, that he might bring out the poor dear children of God, and speak of the path as he experimentally passed through it. While he was speaking from these words, "For in a time accepted have I heard thee, and in a day of salvation have I succoured thee: Behold, now is the accepted time; behold now is the day of salvation," O the wonderful things that he was enabled to bring out of them, as the mouth of God to my soul! As soon as he began to preach, the words dropped into my soul, melted my hard heart, crumbled me into nothing, and laid me in the dust; all my fears were gone, and a sweet hope sprang up in my soul. O the beauty, power, life, and feeling that seemed to clothe the words which dropped from his lips! My soul was, as it were, melted with love to the ever-blessed Jehovah, and to the minister as His servant. I felt a sweet calm in my soul for some time. How worthless were the things of this world to me! I felt that I could leave it and ten thousand other worlds for the name and sake of a precious Christ. But these feelings did not last long; and "I to my own sad state returned"; yet I sometimes feel encouraged under the ministry of the Word, and sweet nearness to the Lord in my daily walks, and whilst working in the fields.

O with what weight have these things lain, at times, on my mind, when I have looked around me, and have seen flocks of goats, wolves, and hypocrites, flocking backwards and forwards to and from the Popish churches and chapels, with merry and cheerful countenances! I cannot describe with my pen what I have often felt for them. They have caused me many gloomy moments. I feel assured that all the elect of God would be brought out from amongst them, and be saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation, before they close their eyes in death; but when I have heard of professor after professor dropping out of time into eternity, without the least shadow of a true Gospel hope, I have had many searchings of heart, and humbling of soul, and cries unto the Lord that He would lead me into that blessed path which leads to Heaven.

But, to conclude. There is still wanting in my soul the witness of the blessed Spirit, witnessing to my spirit the full assurance of the pardon of my sins, so as to give me full satisfaction. This is what I have long sought after with many cries and tears unto the Lord; but I find that by all my wrestlings, strugglings, and cries, I cannot put myself amongst the *manifested* children of God; for I have no power nor might, nor spiritual strength of my own. I am a poor, vile, Hell-deserving wretch, and daily feel the evil workings of my base heart, and the awful abominations which are done in the land of my

soul. A Lover of the Truth, 1843.

Credulous Simpletons

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going” (Prov. 14:15). As we all know, there is a class of people who are so gullible that they believe almost everything they hear, every story that is told, every promise that is made them. They are easily imposed upon, for they do not think for themselves, and never properly outgrow their infancy. Thoroughly unsophisticated, they are ready victims for any retailers of fairy-tales who come along. But there is another class which, concerning natural things, are more cautious and on their guard; who instead of crediting every tale require proof, and who instead of forming estimates by the first glance of the eye, examine things carefully.

This second class to which reference has just been made is, in the affairs of the world, particular, shrewd, not easily imposed upon. We say “in the affairs of the world,” for when it comes to things concerning their eternal destiny, many of this very class are, strange to say, most credulous and easily duped. In matters concerning their never-dying souls, they throw caution to the winds, stifle any suspicions they might have, cease to examine things with due care, and allow themselves to be deceived. Let a man styling himself an “evangelist” come to their community, and they will flock to hear him; let him affirm that he believes the Bible to be God’s word, Christ to be God’s Son, and faith in His blood to be God’s way of salvation, and he is at once received as “orthodox.”

Satisfied thus of the “evangelist’s” orthodoxy, they are as ready to receive what he presents, as the poor heathen are to blindly follow what their “priests” tell them. Or, just as those born in Papist families pliantly yield unto the awful dogma that the Virgin Mary is to be worshipped, so others reared by those belonging to a Protestant denomination which teach that water baptism is requisite in order to obtain the forgiveness of sins, mechanically assent thereto. In like manner, if others sit under a preacher who tells them “All that is necessary in order to salvation is to believe in Christ,” thousands of credulous simpletons believe *him*, to their eternal undoing. Yea, we greatly fear that not a few readers of this Magazine, if they received a letter from the editor addressing them as “Dear Brother” or “Dear Sister,” would be likely to exclaim, “Well, if Brother Pink thinks I am a Christian, there is no need for me to worry about it.” Yes, “the simple believeth every word.”

There is no doubt in the writer’s mind that one of the factors contributing much unto the babel of tongues now existing in Christendom, is the gullibility of the public. Almost any man (or woman) can start a new religion today: providing he has a pleasing personality, a forceful delivery, or a sensational message, he is sure of a following. Again, the conflicting sects already in existence are perpetuated because so many of their adherents blindly accept some man’s say so, believing *their* “church’s” interpretation of the Scriptures, instead of prayerfully searching the Word for themselves. Here too we have the explanation of why so many are in a state of mental confusion, knowing not “whom to believe” or “what to believe.” They hear one preacher after another, attend this Bible conference and that, read numerous magazines and books; and finding the speakers and writers differing so much, these credulous simpletons know not where they stand.

Now this feverish rushing around from “church” to “church,” this readiness to accept almost anything that is heard or read, this lightness of belief, is a most dangerous thing. God has bidden His people to “Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because *many* false prophets are gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1); and

“Prove all things; hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21). O how great is the need for so doing: never more requisite and urgent than in these evil days. How often does that warning occur in the New Testament, “Take heed that no man deceive you” (Matt. 24:4; Eph. 5:6; 1 John 3:7 etc.) To take things on trust is the height of folly. Emulate those spoken of in Acts. 17:11, “These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things *were* so.”

“The simple believeth every word: but the prudent man looketh well to his going.” Not only does he measure what he hears and reads by the unerring standard of God’s Word, but the prudent man also scrutinizes *his own heart*, to see if he can find there the evidences and fruits of regeneration and sanctification. He wishes to make sure that the Holy Spirit has wrought a miracle of grace within him. Deeply impressed with the solemnity of eternity, knowing how prone man is to give himself the benefit of the doubt, he dares not to take anything for granted, he cries, “Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart” (Psa. 26:2).

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Yes, he takes warning from the empty profession all around him, and is fearful lest *he* should prove to be one of the foolish virgins. He refuses to be beguiled by the voice of flatters, who tell him that all is well with his soul. Even though a preacher assures him that he is saved, *that* satisfies him not. He demands something more than a head-knowledge of the letter of Scripture: he wants to know that the law of God has been written on his heart (Heb. 8:10). And in seeking proof of this he spares no pains, and considers no diligence or effort too great.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Observe well the tense of the verb: it is not that he is concerned about the matter and then takes stock once and for all. No, he *continues* to be exercised before God as to the state of his soul. The “simple” may rest satisfied with the fact that they “believed on Christ” so many years ago, but the “prudent” are tender about their *present* relation to God. They realize that nothing but an obedient following of Christ now, a walking with Him now, a communing with Him now, furnishes any satisfactory proof that they were born-again at a certain date in the past.

“The prudent man looketh well to his going.” Yes, he not only examines diligently his heart, but he is deeply concerned about his “way.” Instead of complacently assuming that the warning belongs unto others, *he* is filled with alarm when he reads that, “There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death” (Prov. 14:12). Is it possible that, after all, *he* may be deceived? Yes, very, very possible; yea, exceedingly likely. Such a soul, truly awakened by the Holy Spirit, can have no rest till he makes sure that he is in that “*Narrow Way*” which leadeth unto life, and which FEW indeed find. Reader, which are you: a credulous simpleton, or a prudent soul that “looketh *well*” to your going? If the former, may it please the Lord to shatter your false peace, and make you feel your imminent danger. If the latter, may the Holy Spirit grant increasing diligence to “make your calling and election *sure*” (2 Peter 1:10).—A.W.P.
