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STUDIES
IN THE
SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

CONTENTS

Lift Up	1
Exposition of John's First Epistle	4
<i>34. The Application (2:24)</i>	
The Life and Times of Joshua	10
<i>86. Type and Antitype</i>	
The Application of the Scriptures	15
<i>Part 5</i>	
The Doctrine of Mortification	20
<i>1. Introduction</i>	

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

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

LIFT UP

“He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, and lifteth up the beggar from the dunghill” (1Sa 2:8). What an amazing stoop of love is that—from His throne in the heaven of heavens, the Lord reaches down to the dunghills of earth that He may deliver those who are in a mean and loathsome estate. Nothing is here ascribed to free will or attributed to the creature. “I will extol thee, O LORD, for thou hast lifted me up” (Psa 30:1). Man is a fallen creature, and so wretched is his plight that he is quite incapable of raising himself. He must be divinely lifted out of that horrible pit into which sin has plunged him. Said the Psalmist, “Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death” (Psa 9:13), and that is the acknowledgment of every regenerate and instructed soul. As one well expressed it, when referring to the extreme misery and helplessness of fallen mankind, “If one good thought would save them from hell, it is wholly out of their power to conceive, much less think it.”

What has been pointed out above was blessedly illustrated by the demon-possessed youth, whose case baffled the apostles, and of whom we are told, “Jesus took him by the hand, and lifted him up” (Mar 9:27). But 1 Samuel 2:8 tells us of something yet more wonderful than the grace which seeks out filthy objects who are a mass of corruption, making known *how high* it elevates them, “To set them among princes, and to make them inherit the throne of glory.” God does nothing by halves. He exalts beggars to the status of “dear children.” He takes them into the place of nearness unto Himself. He brings them into union with His dear Son, making them “heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom 8:17). He takes them out of the miry clay of an unregenerate state and sets them upon the rock. Marvellous transition and exaltation is that! Translated from the most abject condition to the highest possible dignity! Shame is displaced by honour, filthy rags by the robe of righteousness, poverty by the unsearchable riches of Christ.

We rightly marvel at the goodness and power of God in raising us from such depths to such heights, but let us also be awed and solemnized by recalling afresh *the awful price* which had to be paid before that could righteously be done. The abasement of the Son of

God was necessary in order to the advancement of vile worms of the earth. He who was rich had to sound the lowest level of poverty before we could be made rich. The Beloved of the Father had to be “lifted up” ere we could be raised—not by an honourable elevation, but by being made an object of shame. The Lord of glory must die in order for hell-deserving sinners to be made alive. “Lifted up” was He upon a convict’s gibbet. Lifted up to be a spectacle of derision to His enemies! Lifted up to be smitten by the hand of divine justice! But also “lifted up” that all men might be drawn unto Him (Joh 12:32)—that is, men of all sorts and conditions, of all nations, of all classes, of all ages. Lifted up to be the Object of faith, that serpent-bitten victims might look unto Him and be healed (Joh 3:14-15).

And what should be *our response* to the abounding grace of God and the knowledge-passing love of Christ? Why, having tasted and seen that the Lord is good, to delight ourselves in Him, to fix our affections on Him, and set Him “as a seal upon the heart” (Song 8:6). We should be engaged with His perfections and seek closer and more intimate communion with Him. As those who have been supernaturally lifted up, we should do as David, “Unto thee, O LORD, do I *lift up my soul*” (Psa 25:1). That is an act of adoration, for the soul of worship is the worship of the soul. It is the owning of God as the Fountain of our happiness. This is confirmed by, “Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul” (Psa 86:4). That is much more than a lifting of the voice, namely a deep and fervent longing to be moulded according to the divine will. It is only God who can put real gladness into the heart, and if we are to experience a continuation thereof we must be careful to maintain communion with Him.

In order for the continuance of that communion, we have to heed God’s precepts and determine, “My hands also will I lift up *unto thy commandments*, which I have loved” (Psa 119:48). That is the gesture of one who longed to embrace the objects of his desire and esteem, of one who hungered and thirsted after (practical) righteousness. How it rebukes the indifference of many professing Christians toward the divine statutes, and makes manifest the enmity of the carnal mind, which stigmatizes obedience to God’s commandments as “legalism” and “bondage.” It was a resolution unto a determined observance of them, signifying I will put forth my utmost endeavours to obey; and that is ever the case where God’s will is delighted in. This is confirmed by the next clause, “and I will meditate in thy statutes” (Psa 119:48). I will apply my mind to them, thinking out how to heed them in all the details of my life. Knowledge and commendation must terminate in practice—compare James 2:12, “So speak *and do*.” Obedience must be serious and diligent, making it our first concern and labour.

Yet love’s resolution cannot be carried out without the requisite strength, and that has to be sought definitely from above. “Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I *lift up my hands* toward thy holy oracle” (Psa 28:2). The lifting up and spreading abroad of the hands is mentioned frequently in the Old Testament as a posture of prayer, Exodus 9:29, 33; 1 Kings 8:22; Psalm 88:9; 141:2, etc. In the New Testament also, “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting” (1Ti 2:8). It is an attitude of earnest supplication. It is an emphatic expression which imports entire dependence of soul upon God, when all looking to the creature is renounced. It is the act of a beggar imploring alms that he may obtain help and succour. It

betokens a sense of need, a seeking the supply of felt wants. It signifies an endeavour to “take hold” of the Lord (Isa 64:7), that we may draw upon His fullness—compare Mark 5:28, 30! It is also an attitude of expectancy, a reaching forth to receive the things promised and asked for.

That we may be better fitted to do so in confidence, faith must be definitely and diligently occupied with its Object. “I will *lift up mine eyes* unto the hills, from whence cometh my help” (Psa 121:1)—those unmovable, durable, unchanging products of God’s hands—themselves the symbols of His immutability and power. We are exhorted, “Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of his might, for that he is strong in power; not one faileth” (Isa 40:26). What we see in creation should ever raise our thoughts to the Creator, and draw out our hearts in homage to Him. “Lift up your eyes to the heavens” (Isa 51:6) and view them, seeing His perfections as they are reflected in them, proclaiming His eternal power and Godhead. Consider what might and wisdom He must possess, what dazzling light He must dwell in, what glory He must be compassed with. That is the language of assurance, as persons abashed and ashamed cannot look up (Luk 18:13), those who walk with Him exclaim, “Our eyes are unto thee” (2Ch 20:12 and cf. Psa 25:15).

“Wherefore *lift up the hands which hang down*, and [strengthen] the feeble knees” (Heb 12:12). Christians should ever remember that they are fellow members of one body; hence, when those who are comparatively hale and hearty spiritually see some of their brethren or sisters in a feeble and forlorn case, it is both their duty and privilege to extend a helping hand to them. As both Ezekiel 7:16-17 and 21:7 show, hands that hang down and feeble knees are figures of faintheartedness. Because of opposition and persecution, some become dejected, others faint under the chastening rod of God, others become discouraged because of unrealized hopes. But whatever be the cause, when a believer perceives any of his fellows giving way to a spirit of sloth and becoming wearied in well-doing, he should pray for them, set before them an example of faith, courage and cheerfulness, and endeavour to give them a word in season. “Say to them that are of a fearful heart, Be strong, fear not: behold, your God” (Isa 35:4). Remind them of the divine faithfulness and sufficiency, quote some of His promises, relate to them some of the gracious dealings and powerful deliverances which you have personally experienced at the Lord’s hand. To those who are groaning under the burden of sin, tell them of the blood and intercession of Christ.

“Cry aloud, spare not, *lift up thy voice* like a trumpet, and show My people their transgressions” (Isa 58:1). That is a word to the preacher, and a most timely one for the present hour. God sees sin in His people, and is displeased therewith. But often they are unwilling to recognize it, and must be shown. The work of ministers is many sided. Tenderness is to be combined with firmness, compassion with boldness, love for souls with concern for God’s glory. They are not only to comfort His people (Isa 42:1), but to “lift up thy voice like a trumpet” (Isa 58:1), sound the alarm, spare not hypocrites, put forth thy strength in so doing. Flatter and deceive them not. However unpopular it makes you, exert yourself and make your voice heard in rebuking the worldliness and carnality, the coldness and formality of the saints. There will be no improvement in the pew unless the pulpit once more performs this duty.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

34. *The Application (2:24)*

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.”

In our present verse John proceeded to make what the Puritans were wont to designate the “improvement” of the subject under discussion, by which they did not mean “to better,” but rather to employ to advantage. In present-day language, the apostle made a practical application of what he had written in verses 18-23. There he had treated of antichrists, and had explained how it was that believers had been preserved from those deceivers: they had received an unction from the Holy One, by which they had obtained the true knowledge of divine and spiritual things. Consequently, he addressed them not as those who were ignorant, but as those who were personally acquainted with the truth. Then, for their fuller information and guidance, he had plainly defined what an antichrist was. Now he made an appeal unto his readers that was based upon the foregoing. In so doing he turned from the false to the true. In the Greek the transition is more marked,¹ for the pronoun “you” is placed at the beginning of the sentence, for the purpose of emphasis:

“Ye therefore what ye have heard from the beginning, in you let it abide: if in you should abide what from the beginning ye heard, also ye in the Son and in the Father shall abide.”

Our present text, then, is an exhortation unto the Lord's people to persevere in the faith, to part not with the truth, to heed not those who sought to entice them away from it. Thus we see once more that it was John's aim not only to inform and establish his readers, but also to move them unto the performance of duty. That was the design of all the Epistle writers: urging the saints not to be content with a bare theoretical knowledge of the Gospel, but to seek to get their hearts fired therewith, so that faith and love should be active and the works of holiness produced. They constantly intermingled doctrinal instruction with moral injunctions, so that the saints should be neither barren nor unfruitful in their knowledge of the Lord Jesus. So again in what immediately follows, for John at once passes from exhortation to remind them of the great promise, and then strikes afresh a note of warning. Therein we may perceive the spiritual wisdom of the apostles in holding so carefully the balance of truth, and the admirable example which they have left preachers and writers to follow: to weave together that which illumines the mind *and* that which calls for the action of the will.

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.” As intimated above in the literal translation of our verse, the words “abide,” “remain,” and “continue” are the same in the original, and, had a uniform rendition been given, the repetition had shown more clearly the deep importance that John attached to this precept—

¹ **marked** – clear; significant.

a case where exactness was unwarrantably sacrificed to variety. The expression “let that abide in you” is designedly antithetical to “the truth is not in us” or “in you” (1:8; 2:4), which means far more than that they were ignorant or unacquainted with it, namely that the truth was *not present* as a vital principle in the soul, as an animating force in their lives. It is not sufficient to hear sound preaching and become mentally acquainted with God’s Word: the same must find a permanent lodgment in the heart if we are really to be benefited by it. Human nature being what it is—weak and unstable—there is a real danger of relinquishing the truth under pressure of persecution for the Gospel’s sake, or through being absorbed with the “cares and riches and pleasures of *this* life” (Luk 8:14), and thus being only a thorny-ground hearer; yea, such is certain to be the outcome unless we be divinely preserved—by God’s stirring us up to guard against the same, and by a diligent performance of our duty.

“Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let *them* slip,” or as the margin renders it, “run out as leaky vessels” (Heb 2:1). If they do so, the fault is entirely their own, through failing to give the more earnest heed to them. It is by being believed that the Gospel becomes efficacious, and “it cannot be believed unless it is understood; it cannot be understood, unless it be attended to. Truth must be kept before the mind in order to its producing an appropriate effect; and how can it be kept before the mind, but by our giving heed to it?” (John Brown, 1722-1787). There needs to be a serious and diligent fixing of the thoughts upon that which we hear, a bowing and bending of the will to yield unto it, a placing of the affections upon it, a bringing of the entire man into conformity with it. Knowledge of the Word must be accompanied by faith therein, obedience thereto, and all other due respects which in any way concern it. Otherwise, it will soon pass out of the mind, like water out of a leaky utensil. “Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; by which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain” (1Co 15:1-2).

“*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning,*” namely that Gospel which you have embraced and confessed, that Gospel wherein the person and offices, the atoning sacrifice, and justifying righteousness of the God-man Mediator is proclaimed, and wherein the example that He has left His disciples to follow is made known. The Gospel and its ordinances of baptism and the Lord’s Supper contain a full revelation of the same. As Paul declared to the Galatians, “before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently [plainly] set forth crucified among you” (3:1). He is the glorious Object exhibited therein. The Gospel is the chariot in which He rides in His majesty. It is the glass in which He shines forth, by means of which He is seen by the eye of faith, through which His glory is reflected, and by which the adoring beholder is “changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2Co 3:18). The excellency, dignity and pre-eminence of His person are there set forth. His fathomless love and abounding grace are there published. His perfect and vicarious obedience, His everlasting righteousness, His cleansing blood, the abiding efficacy of His sacrifice, are expressly declared. His finished work, His blessed victory over the powers of darkness, His triumph over death and the grave, are plainly announced. The Gospel makes known

the unsearchable riches of Christ, the glorious inheritance that He purchased for His people, His coming again to take them to be forever with Himself.

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.” Here we see how the apostle magnified the great ordinance of preaching, by indicating the way in which the good news had been communicated unto them. “Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom 10:17). Christ Himself was anointed to preach the Gospel (Isa 61:1), and commenced His ministry by so doing (Luk 4:21-22). Concerning Him, the Father said, “Hear ye him” (Mat 17:5). When He had completed His ministry, He committed the same work unto His ambassadors, saying, “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mar 16:15), and ever since it has pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1Co 1:21). Now it is a very great favour to hear the Gospel proclaimed, to sit under the ministry of one who exalts the Son of God as the sole and all-sufficient Saviour of sinners. “Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance” (Psa 89:15); whereas those who know it not sit in darkness and in the region of the shadow of death (Mat 4:16). Still better is it to know it in the heart and understand the reality of it. But best of all: for us to abide in the acknowledgment of the truth and for it to abide in us as a regulating principle.

Every privilege carries with it a corresponding obligation, and therefore those who treat the Gospel lightly incur deeper guilt. “For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required” (Luk 12:48). Solemn indeed is the case of those who hear sermon after sermon that faithfully and searchingly warns them of the wrath to come and bids them flee from the same, yet regard them as no more to be remembered than ordinary discourses. Parlous² the condition of all who listen to the preaching of God’s Word merely as a tale that is told, to be no more affected and influenced by it, to go on in their giddy way, as though they had never heard it; to lay aside all thoughts of it as that which little concerns them; to stifle convictions, withstand reproofs, neglect exhortations, refuse the duties enjoined, reject the offers made, and continue in the very sins they hear reproved. Such close their ears to the truth, shut Christ out of their hearts, are possessed of Satan, and heap to themselves wrath against the day of wrath. “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven” (Heb 12:25).

Then *“let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.”* Of Lydia we are told, “whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul” (Act 16:14). She not only listened to but gave heed unto the same, with readiness and resolution. In due proportion to our valuation of the truth will be our earnestness and efforts to make it our own. “If thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; if thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; then shalt thou understand the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God” (Pro 2:3-5). Silver and gold lie not on the surface of the ground to be picked up by any lazy person, but can be reached and secured only by hard work and persevering toil. Likewise, in order to learn God’s will as He has revealed it, the Scriptures must be searched (Joh

² **parlous** – dangerous; perilous; risky.

5:39), searched daily (Act 17:11), one part carefully compared with another (1Co 2:13). And in order for that Word to quicken, govern, and make us fruitful, it has to be prayed over, meditated upon day and night (Psa 1:2-3), made the food of the soul (Jer 15:16), and put into practice (Jam 1:22), and thereby are we “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2Ti 3:17).

This exhortation, “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning,” is no casual or trivial one, but one that in varied language occurs and recurs throughout the Scriptures. “Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life” (Deu 4:9, and cf. verse 23; 8:11). “Let thine heart retain my words...Get wisdom, get understanding: forget it not; neither decline from the words of my mouth.” “Take fast hold of instruction: let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life” (Pro 4:4, 5, 13): that “Take fast hold of” implies that there must be deep interest, determination of purpose, perseverance of effort. “My son, attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart” (Pro 4:20-21), yes, “in the midst of thine heart” and not merely on the threshold of it; there only will it be operative, for “out of the heart are the issues of life.”

“Let these sayings sink down into your ears” (Luk 9:44), by storing them in your memory and ruminating on the same, which is what the mother of our Lord did: “Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart” (Luk 2:19). That was in sharp and blessed contrast with the rocky-ground hearers, who though they “receive the word with joy” yet “have no root, which for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away” (Luk 8:13). It is not enough to believe or receive the truth: it must have a permanent place in the soul. As Paul informed the Colossians, Christ would yet present them unblamable and unreprouvable to the Father: “If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel” (1:23). In order thereto we need to make the Gospel our constant study, to become thoroughly acquainted with the Scriptures, and cordially assent to them, to receive the truth in the love of it, to feed daily thereon, so that our judgments are formed by its teaching, our hearts cast into the mould of it, our consciences directed by it. Thereby shall we be enriched with true spiritual wisdom and knowledge, and be enabled to walk acceptably before God and adorn the doctrine we profess.

“*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*” The “therefore” has in view what the apostle treated of in verses 18-23, and points a solemn warning, as well as presses an urgent duty. Alas, the majority of professing Christians have nothing more than a few notions floating about in their heads, and consequently they are easily swayed by any plausible deceiver, carried hither and thither by every wind that blows, tossed about like a ship with no ballast in its hold. It is not by deliberate *intention* that so many depart from the faith and give heed to seducing spirits, but through *inattention* to what they heard at the beginning, because of their indolence and failure to make the truth their own. The seed that remains on the surface of the ground is quickly devoured by the fowls of the air; only as it becomes “the engrafted word” is it able to save our souls (Jam 1:21). And in order thereto we must be able to say with David, “Thy word

have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee” (Psa 119:11). Only as God’s Word is stored and treasured in the heart will the heart be preserved from apostasy.

“*Let that therefore abide in you*” as a peculiar treasure, as a welcome guest, as your guide by day and companion by night. Imbibe it as the dry ground does the refreshing showers. Yield your entire being to its sway, so that it nourishes your soul, enlightens your understanding, purifies your affections, regulates your will. Let it so abide in you that it is reduced to practice. Let it abide in you by the exercise of faith, by constant contemplation, by affectionate esteem. “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Col 3:16). The word “dwell” there means “to keep house,” to have authority over its arrangements, as having the right to control. We are to be governed by it, to receive our instructions and directions from it. The word “richly” signifies “largely,” as a whole, in its utmost compass; in contrast with sparsely or fragmentally. Make it your food and drink, your sustenance and strength, your comfort and joy: only by so doing will it have its proper influence over you. Then will the Word abide in you not merely as a fact in the brain, but as that which is actually realized in your experience.

“*Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.*” The second clause conveys a double idea. *First*, it is an exhortation having the same force as that of Revelation 3:11, “Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown,” or shame you by despoiling you of your spiritual glory. You need to be constantly awake and on the alert, for the devil will seek to rob your soul of that which is more precious than gold or rubies. If, in view of the fact that “evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived,” Timothy needed the injunction, “But continue thou in the things which thou hast learned and hast been assured of” (2Ti 3:14), much more so do the writer and the reader. Having bought the truth, sell it not. Our adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour (1Pe 5:8); but every believer ought to be able to say, “by the word of thy lips I have kept *me from* the paths of the destroyer” (Psa 17:4). But in order thereto he must store up that Word in his mind, in his affections, in his conscience, so that it is ever ready to hand when needed—as in the case of our Lord when tempted of Satan.

Second, this exhortation imports,³ Forsake not for any novelties those things you heard at the beginning and which were blessed to your conversion. Be not like the Athenians, who “spent their time in nothing else, but either to tell, or to hear some new thing” (Act 17:21); but rather “ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls” (Jer 6:16). Of old God complained that false prophets caused His people “to stumble in their ways from the ancient paths, to walk in paths, in a way not cast up” by His appointment (Jer 18:15). So too He foretold that a day would come in this Christian era “when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears” (2Ti 4:3). It was because of this evil tendency that we find the apostles went about “confirming the souls of the disciples, exhorting them to continue in the faith” (Act 14:22). “Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning” means, Give it not up for any new doctrine propagated by antichrists, but cherish the truth and incorporate it into your life. Spiritual

³ **imports** – means; signifies.

progress, or growth in grace, does not mean that you will ever outgrow the Gospel, yet how many come to despise foundational truth and prefer human speculations on prophecy!

“If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father.” There is much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether the “if” should be regarded as a conditional or a declaratory one; personally, we consider it is both. That it is conditional is clear from the verb employed in the last clause: it is not “if that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also do continue in the Son,” but “ye also shall” do so—providing you meet the required stipulation the latter will follow. In other words, the truth remaining and operating in the soul as a vital principle, exerting a practical power in the life, is the means of maintaining communion with the Son and the Father. As there can be no knowledge of Christ except *through* or *by means of* the Gospel, so there can be no fellowship with Him but by believingly and adoringly cleaving to the Gospel. As Christ will not walk with those who pursue a course of self-will, neither will He have any concord with one who gives ear to His enemies and treads the path of error. Only by faith in and obedience to the Word is preserved our experiential union with the Lord.

On the other hand, in view of the context, it is equally plain that the “if” of our present verse is evidential or demonstrative. Speaking of some who had apostatized from the faith John declared, “They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us” (verse 19): it was the turning of their backs upon the truth which made it manifest that they never had any vital union with Christ. So too taught the Lord Himself: unto those who professed to believe in Him, He said: “If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed” (Joh 8:31); that is, your perseverance in the faith will demonstrate you to be such in truth—not that they became His disciples by so doing, but that they supplied evidence that they were such as He owned. And again, He averred: “If a man love me, he will keep my words” (Joh 14:23), for true love ever endeavours to please its object. If there be no keeping of His words, no cleaving fast to His Gospel, no walking according to His precepts, no living upon His promises, then the claim to love Him is a false one. Thus steadfastness in the faith and obedience are the marks of our saving oneness with the Son.

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning.” That clearly presupposes that they had previously received the truth in the love of it, but that they are exhorted to fix and fasten the same “as a nail in a sure place”—by mixing faith therewith, setting their affections upon it and delighting therein. That which you received at the time of your conversion concerning the person, work, and salvation of Christ, must be the touchstone by which all that you hear and read is to be tested. Great will be the benefits from so doing: thereby you will be fortified against false teachers. As one pithily put it, “Revise the old Gospel and you devise another.” We must reserve for the opening paragraphs of the next chapter a further remark on the last half of our verse.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

86. *Type and Antitype*

In Numbers 34:17, we learn that JEHOVAH gave orders, "These are the names of the men which shall divide the land unto you: Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun," and, as we have seen, that divine commandment was duly obeyed (Jos 14:1). The careful student will observe that in 17:4; 19:51; and 21:1, mention is again made of "Eleazar the priest, and Joshua the son of Nun." The repeated reference to these two men in a book which is so rich in its typical teaching, and especially since the order of mentioning their names varies not—Eleazar being mentioned before Joshua in each case—intimates that this is a detail which calls for our careful consideration. Even on the surface, the spiritual significance is apparent—Joshua alone, as the one appointed by God to be the commander and leader of His people, was not sufficient to portray the fullness of the blessed truth foreshadowed in this section of the Word—he must be supplemented by the presence of the high priest. It is in the conjoint persons and combined actions of both together that we have the complete shadowing forth of the offices and functions which were united in the Lord Jesus Christ. Reference was made to this in the twenty-third and twenty-fourth articles of this series, and we must now fulfil the promise made there of amplifying the same.

As we pointed out when pondering the early chapters of this book, a prominent place was given unto *the priests* as they bore the sacred "ark of the covenant" in connection with the crossing of the Jordan and the capture of Jericho (Jos 3:6, 6:4). Therein, we are shown the nation of Israel in its primary relation to God. In the central books of the Pentateuch, we learn of the order of things which the Lord established among His people, and the revelation of His will through Moses, who was alike the divinely appointed commander and mediator, while Aaron was His and their high priest. As his immediate successor, that relationship was reaffirmed at the beginning of Joshua's public career, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee" (Jos 1:5), and, in addition thereto, there was the necessary continuance of the Levitical priesthood in Israel's midst, for the service connected with the ark and the worship of the tabernacle, which neither Joshua nor his men of war were suffered to touch. Each of those great functionaries held their respective appointments directly from the Lord, and the two, in inseparable conjunction, whether in the divine sanctuary or the camp of Israel, executed the declared will of JEHOVAH and maintained His majesty and holiness as well as His grace and mercy.

On the one hand, the tabernacle and the priesthood was the divinely appointed way for them to approach the Most High as worshippers. On the other hand, the ark of the covenant was the visible symbol of JEHOVAH's presence with His people in the sight of all their enemies (1Sa 4:4-7). As Moses and Aaron had been inseparable in their ministrations at the exodus from Egypt and in the wilderness, so both the priest and the captain were required at the door of the tabernacle in Shiloh for the settlement of the twelve tribes in the promised land. To repeat what we said earlier, not only were those two orders and services established by God at the beginning (hinted at in Exodus 4:14-15), but upon the death of

Aaron, Moses stripped him of his garments and in the sight of all the congregation put them on Eleazar his son (Num 20:27-28). So too, as the death of Moses approached, he besought the Lord to “set a man *over* the congregation,” and he was bidden to take Joshua and “lay thine hand upon him [the symbol of identification]; and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight” (Num 27:16-19). The connection and contrast between them was intimated thus, “And he shall stand before Eleazar the priest, who shall ask counsel for him after the judgment of Urim before the LORD: at his word shall they go out, and at his word they shall come in” (verse 21).

It has been more or less generally recognized that Joshua was (as his very name intimates) one of the outstanding Old Testament characters who in many respects foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. But it has been perceived by very few that Eleazar was a type of Him in the exercise of His sacerdotal office, and that the two must be viewed in conjunction in order to contemplate the completeness of their joint administrations. That should at once be apparent from their immediate predecessors, for we require to join together Moses and Aaron in order to obtain the divinely designed prefiguration of Him who was both “the Apostle and the High Priest of our profession. Christ Jesus” (Heb 3:1). Thus it was also with Eleazar and Joshua, so often seen together in this book. So too, the priests with the ark of the covenant, as well as Eleazar and the tabernacle at Shiloh, have a more prominent place in this portion of the Scriptures than is commonly recognized, and which not a few would find difficult to apply unto Christians. And still more difficult were they to attempt to trace the parallel between the book of Joshua and the Pauline epistles. Yet the parallel, a most real and blessed one, *is* to be found there, as another before us has shown.

The key to the spiritual application unto Christians of so much that is found in the Old Testament lies in recognizing that the history of Israel, from their deliverance from the house of bondage to their establishment in the land, was a *typical* one. The two great crises in their history occurred at the Red Sea and the Jordan, between which there is both a comparison and a contrast. In connection with the former, Israel neither left twelve stones in its bed nor took twelve out with them unto the other side—as they *did* on the latter occasion (Jos 4:9, 20). Instead, Pharaoh and his captains, with their horses and chariots, lay dead at the bottom of the sea, as a witness that the mighty power of the enemy, which held Israel captive in Egypt, had been overthrown and that the depths covered them. “But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on the left” (Exo 14:28-29). Thus, the Lord saved them that day out of the hand of the Egyptians, whom they saw dead upon the shore; while He put a song in their mouths, saying, “The LORD hath triumphed gloriously” (Exo 15:1).

The Red Sea then was a memorial between JEHOVAH and His people, that the antagonistic power, which held them captive and refused to let them go, had been broken in pieces. But at the Jordan, there was overthrown an opposing power of the enemy that refused to let the people enter into their inheritance. It is in these two ways particularly that we need to be constantly upon our watch against the devil. At the Red Sea, God brought Israel unto Himself and taught them redemption by power—His right hand having dashed in pieces the enemy. But at the Jordan, a further lesson was taught them, namely, that the people thus brought to God must pass through *their own* death and resurrection—figured

by the twelve stones left *in* the river and the twelve stones taken *out* and placed on the other side. They were to begin a fresh chapter in their history, with the Ark of the Covenant, with their new circumcision at Gilgal, with Joshua and the Passover, and the captain of the Lord's host with the drawn sword. In contrast with Pharaoh and his hosts at the Red Sea, no Canaanites were in the Jordan, nor was a single foe overthrown there, but it was sanctified to the Lord and to Israel by the priests and the Ark of the Covenant for glory and victory.

Now, it is most important and blessed for us to see that the epistles of Paul take up the types from Exodus and Joshua and show how the substance of them is realized in Christ for all believers. The former is developed in Romans, where their spiritual deliverance and eternal redemption—adumbrated at the Red Sea—are fully set forth. So too, the fulfilment of what was prefigured at the Jordan—the Christian's *own* (legal) death and resurrection, by virtue of his federal oneness with the Surety—are declared in Ephesians and Colossians. While the tabernacle at Shiloh in the land of Canaan and Eleazar the high priest find their similitudes throughout that wondrous epistle to the Hebrews, where we behold our great High Priest ministering within the veil, maintaining the relationship of God with His redeemed below, on the ground of His all-sufficient sacrifice for sin. As the tabernacle with its priesthood was necessary for Israel in Joshua's day for the enforcing of God's holiness and to provide a way of approach unto Himself, so the priestly ministry of Christ on high is indispensable for upholding the requirements of God's throne, and giving access thereto to those who are made partakers of the heavenly calling.

Three objects are outstandingly prominent in the book of Joshua. First, Joshua himself, as the commander of Israel, the divinely appointed captain over them. Second, the ark of the covenant, which was not only the witness of JEHOVAH's presence in the midst of His people, but also the symbol of His relations with them. Third, the person and functions of Eleazar, the high priest. In connection with the second, there is a most striking word in Numbers 10:33, "and the ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them in the three days' journey, to search out *a resting place* for them." That is the key passage, and it should be carefully borne in mind when reading the early chapters of our present book. It had reference to Israel's journey across the wilderness, but was indicative and anticipative of what took place upon their entrance into Canaan. The appellation there given to the sacred coffer is to be carefully noted, namely, "the ark of *the covenant* of the LORD." Thus, it was the visible emblem and reminder of His peculiar relationship to them.

Accordingly, we find that, in connection with the crossing of the Jordan and Israel's entrance into the promised land, God gave express orders to Joshua, "Take up the ark of the covenant, and pass over before the people" (Jos 3:6), and then Joshua said unto the people, "Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD *your* God....Hereby ye shall know that the living God is among you, and that he will without fail drive out from before you the Canaanites....Behold, the ark of the covenant of the LORD of all the earth passeth over before you into Jordan" (Jos 3:9-11). Thus, every eye of the congregation was fixed upon the ark of the covenant of the Lord their God, who had gone before them to find a resting place for them (cf. 2Ch 6:41-42), and an inheritance worthy of Himself, for them to share His delights with His chosen people. Before the ark, the waters "stood and rose up upon an heap," so that "all the Israelites passed over on dry ground" (Jos 3:16-17). What anointed

eye can fail to see here that blessed One whom the ark ever foreshadowed—Him who declared, “When he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth *before* them,” “I go to prepare a *place* for you,” and “Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am” (Joh 10:4; 14:2; 17:24)? As the all-sufficient One, Christ has gone before His people to prepare a place for them in the Canaan above.

That ark of the covenant wondrously foreshadowed the Lord Jesus. The two materials of which it was composed, namely the shittim wood and gold, pointed to the duality of His person—His incorruptible humanity and His glorious deity. Its wondrous contents (described in Hebrews 9:4) tell of the provisions which God has made for His people in Christ while they are journeying through the wilderness. First, “the golden pot that had manna” speaks of Him as the Bread of life, the food of His pilgrim people. Second, “Aaron’s rod that budded” pointed to Christ’s resurrection and the life which we have in Him. Third, the two tables of stone, on which were written the Ten Commandments, placed within the ark for safe custody, announce that the law was fully realized in Christ, who kept it perfectly in thought and word and deed, His obedience being reckoned to the account of each one who believes in Him. Likewise, its dimensions, its staves and rings, coverings, names, career, and, above all, the place of supreme honour assigned it in the holy of holies, all pointed to spiritual realities which are found in Him who came forth from God, full of grace and truth, to tabernacle among men, and to provide an eternal resting place for His people.

And where in the Epistles do we find the Holy Spirit setting before us the substance of those shadows? Where but in *the Hebrews*? It opens with the grand announcement that God, who in time past fragmentally declared His mind through the prophets, is now fully and finally revealed in and by His Son. It then goes on to describe the divine perfections of the God-man Mediator, whom God has appointed to be Heir of all things, He being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person. Before mention is made of the angels, Moses, Aaron or Melchizedek, there is presented to our view the One by whom the worlds were made, who upholds all things by the word of His power, and who is set down at the right hand of the Majesty on high (Heb 1). There we have, unmistakably, the antitype of what was adumbrated not only in Joshua 3, but again in the sixth chapter, which also tells of the prominent and honourable place which was accorded the ark—designated “His glory” in 1 Samuel 4:22 and cf. Psalm 78:61—as it was borne by the priests in front of Israel’s armed men as they encompassed the walls of Jericho.

If the first chapter of Hebrews exhibits the “gold” or the divine perfections of Him who is the antitypical ark, equally so does the second chapter display its “wood” or the nature and reality of His humanity. For there we read of the Son being made a little lower than the angels, of His becoming partaker of flesh and blood, of His being made in all things like unto His brethren, of His being tempted and suffering. But more. Hebrews 2 informs us that He thus voluntarily humbled Himself in order that “*through death* he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.” There we behold the solemn fulfilment of what was foreshadowed fifteen hundred years previously—the antitypical ark going down into the Jordan, and that at the time when it “overfloweth all his banks” (Jos 3:15), so that the suffering One cried in anguish, “All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me” (Psa

42:7). And what is the substance of the whole of Hebrews 3 and 4 but a continuous exhortation for the true Israel of God to *follow the ark*, to fix their eyes upon and their hearts steadfastly to cleave unto the One who will lead them into an everlasting rest (Heb 3:1; 6:14; 4:1, 11)?

Not only is it the antitypical ark which is before us in Hebrews, but specifically as “the ark of the covenant”—the actual term occurring there no less than seventeen times. The same Greek word is found in all of the following passages, though unhappily our translators used the term “testament” in some of them—we have rendered it uniformly. “Jesus was made a surety of a better covenant” (Heb 7:22). “He is the mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8:6). Then, we read of “the blood of the covenant wherewith he [the Son of God] was sanctified” (Heb 10:29 and cf. Joh 17:19), yea, “the blood of the everlasting covenant” (Heb 13:20). While reference is twice made there to “the new covenant” which the Lord makes with His people (Heb 8:10; 10:16), in which He puts His laws into their minds and writes them on their hearts, promises to be a God unto them, brings all to know Him vitally and experientially, is merciful to their unrighteousness and remembers their sins and iniquities no more. As the nation of Israel owed all their temporal blessings unto JEHOVAH’s covenant relationship to them, so do Christians owe all their spiritual blessings to His covenant relationship unto them. Alas, that covenant truth is so little preached and apprehended today. Nothing is left to chance. Everything is “ordered in all things and sure” (2Sa 23:5) according to that compact of grace which the Father entered into with the Son ere the foundations of the world were laid.

Last, but by no means least, this wondrous epistle to the Hebrews sets forth Christ not only as the Captain of our salvation (Heb 2:10), the antitypical Joshua, but as our “great High Priest” (Heb 4:14), the antitypical Eleazar. As in the book of Joshua, the priest and the priesthood are accorded a most distinguished place—not only in bearing the ark of the covenant before the people, but also in connection with the securing of their inheritance—so in this epistle, the priesthood of Christ is opened up to us as it is nowhere else in the New Testament. What signal honour did God put upon the priesthood when He caused the waters of the Jordan to stand still immediately the priests’ feet touched its brim, and, then, as soon as they stepped on the Canaan shore, the waters returned again to their banks! It was through the high priest that they received the mind of the Lord (Jos 17:4; 21:1), and that Joshua took his orders (Num 27:21). The land was distributed under his supervision (Jos 19:51). And not only does Christ appear no less than fifteen times in His sacerdotal character in Hebrews, but Hebrews 8:1 and 2, announces, “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such a high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.”

THE APPLICATION OF THE SCRIPTURES

Part 5

In these articles, we are seeking to show the use which believers should make of God's Word. Or more particularly, how that it is both their privilege and their duty to receive *the whole of it* as addressed immediately *unto* themselves, and to turn the same unto practical account, by appropriating its contents to their personal needs. The Bible is a book which calls not so much for the exertion of our intellect as it does for the exercise of our affections, conscience, and will. God has given it to us not for our entertainment, but for our education, to make known what He requires from us. It is to be the traveller's guide as he journeys through the maze of this world, the mariner's chart as he sails the sea of life. Therefore, whenever we open the Bible, the all-important consideration for each of us to keep before him is, "What is there here *for me today?* What bearing does the passage now before me have upon my present case and circumstances—what warning, what encouragement, what information? What instruction is there to direct me in the management of my business, to guide me in the ordering of my domestic and social affairs, to promote a closer walking with God?"

I should see myself addressed in every precept, included in every promise. But it is greatly to be feared that, through failure to appropriate God's Word unto their own case and circumstances, there is much Bible reading and study which is of little or no real benefit to the soul. Nothing else will secure us from the infections of this world, deliver from the temptations of Satan, and be so effectual a preservative from sin, as the Word of God received into our affections. "The law of his God is *in his heart*; none of his steps shall slide" (Psa 37:31) can only be said of the one who has made personal appropriation of that Law, and is able to aver with the Psalmist, "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psa 119:11). Just so long as the truth is actually working in us, influencing us in a practical way, is loved and revered by us, stirs the conscience, are we kept from falling into open sin—as Joseph was preserved when evilly solicited by his master's wife (Gen 39:9). And only as we personally go out and daily gather our portion of manna, and feed upon the same, will there be strength provided for the performing of duty and the bringing forth of fruit to the glory of God.

Let us take Genesis 17:1 as a simple illustration. "And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect" or "sincere." *How* is the Christian to apply such a verse *unto himself?* First of all, let him note to whom this signal favour and honour was shown, namely, to him who is the "father of all them that believe" (Rom 4:11, 12, 16)—and he was the first person in the world to whom the Lord is said to have appeared! Second, observe when it was that JEHOVAH appeared unto him, namely, in his old age, when nature's force was spent and death was written on the flesh. Third, mark attentively the particular character in which the Lord was now revealed to him, "the Almighty God," or more literally "*El Shaddai*"—"the all-sufficient God." Fourth, consider the exhortation which accompanied the same, "Walk before me, and be thou sincere." Fifth, ponder those details in the light of the immediate sequel, God's making a promise that he should beget a

son by Sarah, who was long past the age of child-bearing (Gen 17:15-19). Everything that is *for* God must be effected by His mighty power. He can and must do everything—the flesh profits nothing, no movement of mere nature is of any avail.

Now, as the believer ponders that memorable incident, *hope* should be inspired within him. *El Shaddai* is as truly *his* God as He was Abraham's! That is clear from 11 Corinthians 7:1, for one of those promises is, "I...will be a Father unto you...saith the Lord *Almighty*" (2Co 6:18), and from Revelation 1:8, where the Lord Jesus says unto the churches, "I am Alpha and Omega...the Almighty." It is a declaration of His omnipotence, to whom all things are possible. "The all-sufficient God" tells of what He is in Himself—self-existent, independent. And what He is unto His people—the Supplier of their every need. When Christ said to Paul, "My grace *is sufficient* for thee" (2Co 12:9), it was all one with what JEHOVAH said unto Abraham. Doubtless the Lord appeared unto the patriarch in visible (and human) form. He does so to us before the eyes of faith. Often, He is pleased to meet with us in the ordinances of His grace, and send us on our way rejoicing. Sometimes He "manifests" Himself (Joh 14:21) to us in the retirements of privacy. Frequently, He appears *for us* in His providences, showing Himself strong on our behalf. "Now," says He, "walk before me sincerely" in the believing realization that I am all-sufficient for thee, conscious of My almightiness, and all will be well with thee.

Let us now adduce some of the many *proofs* of the assertions made in our opening sentences, proofs supplied by the Holy Spirit and the Lord Jesus in the application which They made of the Scriptures. It is very striking indeed to discover that the very first moral commandment which God gave to mankind, namely, that which was to regulate the marriage relationship, was couched in such terms that it comprehended a divine law which is *universally and perpetually* binding. "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife; and they shall be one flesh" (Gen 2:24)—quoted by Christ in Matthew 19:5. "When a man hath taken a wife, and married her, and it come to pass that she find no favour in his eyes, because he hath found some uncleanness in her: then let him write her a bill of divorcement" (Deu 24:1). That statute was given in the days of Moses, nevertheless, we find our Lord referring to the same and telling the Pharisees of His day, "For the hardness of your heart he wrote *you* this precept" (Mar 10:5).

The principle for which we are here contending is beautifully illustrated in Psalm 27:8, "When thou saidst, Seek *ye* my face; my heart said unto thee, thy face LORD, will *I* seek." Thus, he made particular what was general, applying to himself personally what was said to the saints collectively. That is ever the use each of us should make of every part of God's Word—as we see the Saviour in Matthew 4:7, changing the "ye" of Deuteronomy 6:16 to "thou." So again in acts 1:20, we find Peter, when alluding to the defection of Judas, altering the "let *their* habitation" of Psalm 69:25 to "let *his* habitation be desolate." That was not taking an undue liberty with Holy Writ, but, instead, making a specific application of what was indefinite.

"Put not forth thyself in the presence of the king, and stand not in the place of great men: for better it is that it be said unto thee, Come up hither: than that thou shouldest be put lower in the presence of the prince whom thine eyes have seen" (Pro 25:6-7). Upon which Thomas Scott (1747-1821) justly remarked, "There can be no reasonable doubt but that our Lord referred to those words in His admonition to ambitious guests at the

Pharisee's table (Luk 14:7-11), and was understood to do so. While, therefore, this gives His sanction to the book of Proverbs, it also shows that those maxims may be applied to similar cases, and that we need not confine their interpretation exclusively to the subject which gave rise to the maxims." Not even the presence of Christ, His holy example, His heavenly instruction, could restrain the strife among His disciples over which should be the greatest. Loving to have the pre-eminence (3Jo 1:9-10) is the bane of godliness in the churches.

"I the LORD have called thee...and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." "I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth" (Isa 42:6; 49:6). Those words were spoken by the Father unto the Messiah, yet in Acts 13:46-47, we find Paul saying of himself and Barnabas, "Lo, we turn to the Gentiles. For so hath the Lord commanded *us*; saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth"! So again in Romans 10:15, we find the apostle was inspired to make application unto Christ's servant of that which was said immediately of Him, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of *Him* that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace" (Isa 52:7). "How shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of *them* that preach the gospel of peace" (Rom 10:15). "He is near that justifieth me...who is he that shall condemn me? (Isa 50:8-9). The context shows unmistakably that Christ is there the speaker, yet in Romans 8:33-34, the apostle hesitates not to apply those words unto the members of His body, "Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth?"

The unspeakably solemn commission given to Isaiah concerning his apostate generation (Isa 6:9-10) was applied by Christ to the people of His day, saying, "And *in them* is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah" (Mat 13:14-15). Again, in Isaiah 29:13, Isaiah announced that the Lord said, "This people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me." While in Matthew 15:7-8, we find Christ saying to the scribes and Pharisees, "Hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of *you*, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth," etc. Even more striking is Christ's rebuke unto the Sadducees, who denied the resurrection of the body. "Have ye not read that which was *spoken unto you* by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mat 22:31-32). What God spoke immediately to Moses at the burning bush was designed equally for the instruction and comfort of all men unto the end of the world. What the Lord has said unto a particular person, He says unto everyone who is favoured to read His Word. Thus does it concern us to hear and heed the same, for by that Word we shall be judged in the last great day (Joh 12:48).

The fundamental principle for which we are here contending is plainly expressed again by Christ in Mark 13:37, "And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." That exhortation to the apostles is addressed directly to the saints in all generations and places. As John Owen (1616-1683) well said, "The Scriptures speak to every age, every church, every person, not less than to those to whom they were first directed. This showeth us how we should be affected in reading the Word. We should read it as a letter written by the Lord of grace from heaven, *to us by name.*" If there be any books in the New Testament

particularly restricted, it is the “pastoral epistles,” yet the exhortation found in 11 Timothy 2:19 is generalized, “*Let every one* that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” Those who are so fond of restricting God’s Word would say that, “Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ” (2Ti 2:3) is addressed to the minister of the Gospel, and pertains not to the rank and file of believers. But Ephesians 6:10-17 shows (by necessary implication) that it applies to *all* the saints, for the militant figure is again used, and used there without limitation. The Bullinger school insists that James and Peter—who gave warning of those who in the last time should walk after their own ungodly lusts—wrote to Jewish believers only. But Jude (addressed to all the sanctified) declares they “told *you*” (Jude 1:18).

“Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children. My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord” (Heb 12:5). That exhortation is taken from Proverbs 3:11, so that here is further evidence that the precepts of the Old Testament (like its promises) are not restricted unto those who were under the Mosaic economy, but apply with equal directness and force to those under the new covenant. Observe well the tense of the verb “which *speaketh*.” Though written a thousand years previously, Paul did not say “which hath spoken”—the Scriptures are a living Word through which their Author speaks *today*. Note too, “which speaketh *unto you*”—New Testament saints. All that is contained in the book of Proverbs is as truly and as much the Father’s instruction to Christians as the contents of the Pauline epistles. Throughout that book, God addresses us individually as “My son” (Pro 2:1, 3:1; 4:1; 5:1). That exhortation is as urgently needed by believers now as by any who lived in former ages. Though children of God, we are still children of Adam—wilful, proud, independent, requiring to be disciplined, to be under the Father’s rod, to bear it meekly, and to be exercised thereby in our hearts and consciences.

A word now upon *transferred application*, by which we mean giving a literal turn to language which is figurative, or vice versa. Thus, whenever the writer steps on to icy roads, he hesitates not to literalize the prayer, “Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe” (Psa 119:117). “I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety” (Psa 4:8) is to be given its widest latitude, and regarded as both the rest of the body under the protection of Providence and the repose of the soul in the assurance of God’s protecting grace. In 11 Corinthians 8:14, Paul urges that there should be an equality of giving, or a fair distribution of the burden, in the collection being made to relieve the afflicted saints in Jerusalem. That appeal was backed up with, “As it is written, he that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack” (2Co 8:15). That is a reference to the manna gathered by the Israelites (Exo 16:18). Those who gathered the largest quantity had more to give unto the aged and feeble. So rich Christians should use their surplus to provide for the poor of the flock. But great care needs to be taken lest we clash with the Analogy of the Faith. Thus, “the house of Saul waxed weaker and weaker” (2Sa 3:1) certainly does not mean that “the flesh” becomes enervated as the believer grows in grace, for universal Christian experience testifies that indwelling sin rages as vigorously at the end as at the beginning.

A brief word upon *double application*. Whereas preachers should ever be on their guard against taking the children’s bread and casting it to the dogs (Mat 15:26), by applying to the unsaved, promises given to or statements made concerning the saints. On

the other hand, they need to remind believers of the *continuous force* of the Scriptures and their present suitability to their cases. For instance, the gracious invitations of Christ, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Mat 11:28), and “If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink” (Joh 7:37), must not be limited to our first approach to the Saviour as lost sinners, but as 1 Peter 2:4 says, “to whom coming”—in the present tense. Note too, the “mourn” and not “have mourned” in Matthew 5:4 and “hunger” in verse 6. In like manner, that self-abasing word, “Who maketh thee to differ!” (1Co 4:7) today—first from the unsaved, second from what *we* were before the new birth, and third from other Christians with less grace and gifts? Why, a sovereign God, and, therefore, you have nothing to boast of and no cause for self-glorying.

A word now upon *the Spirit's application* of the Word unto the heart, and our task is completed. This is described in such a verse as, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance” (1Th 1:5). That is very much more than having the mind informed or the emotions stirred, and something radically different from being deeply impressed by the preacher's oratory, earnestness, etc. It is for the preaching of the Gospel to be accompanied by the supernatural operation of the Spirit, and the efficacious grace of God, so that souls are divinely quickened, convicted, converted, delivered from the dominion of sin and Satan. When the Word is applied by the Spirit to a person, it acts like the entrance of a two-edged sword into his inner man, piercing, wounding, slaying his self-complacency and self-righteousness—as in the case of Saul of Tarsus (Rom 7:9-10). This is the “demonstration of the Spirit” (1Co 2:4), whereby He gives proof of the truth by the effects produced in the individual to which it is savingly applied, so that he has “much assurance”—i.e. he *knows* it is *God's Word* because of the radical and permanent change wrought in him.

Now the child of God is in daily need of this gracious working of the Holy Spirit to make the Word work “effectually” (1Th 2:13) within his soul and truly regulate his life, so that he can thankfully acknowledge, “I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast *quickened me*” (Psa 119:93). For that quickening, it is his duty and privilege to pray (Psa 119:25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149, etc.). It is a fervent request that he may be “renewed day by day” in the inner man (2Co 4:16), that he may be “strengthened with might by His Spirit” (Eph 3:16), that he may be revived and animated to go in the path of God's commandments (Psa 119:35). It is an earnest petition that his heart may be awed by a continual sense of God's majesty, and melted by a realization of His goodness, so that he may see light in God's light, recognizing the evil in the things forbidden and the blessedness of the things enjoined. “Quicken thou me” is a prayer for vitalizing grace that he may be taught to profit (Isa 48:17), for the increasing of his faith, the strengthening of his expectations, the firing of his zeal. It is equivalent to “Draw me, we will run after thee” (Song 1:4).

THE DOCTRINE OF MORTIFICATION

1. Introduction

What! Yet another series of *doctrinal* articles? Yes, and we offer no apology for the same, for though they will not increase the popularity of this magazine, they should its value. We do not expect them to be widely welcomed, for our lot is cast in a time when the rank and file of professing Christians “will not endure sound doctrine” (2Ti 4:3). Yet, it is to be duly noted that in the verse immediately preceding, the servant of God is enjoined to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove [carnality and worldliness], rebuke [hypocrites and graceless professors], exhort [unto piety and practical holiness] with all longsuffering [ever bearing in mind the infinite patience of God unto your own dullness and tardiness] and *doctrine*” (2Ti 4:2)—no matter how unfavourably it be received. Like the beloved apostle, let this writer, and every preacher who reads these pages, make it his aim to keep “back nothing that was [is] profitable” (Act 20:20) unto his readers and hearers. Only thus will he faithfully discharge his commission and show himself approved unto his Master.

It is the studied judgment of this writer, and he is by no means alone therein, that *doctrinal preaching* is the most pressing need of the churches today. During the past fifty years, a lot has been said about and much prayer has been made for a God-sent *revival*, but it is to be feared that that term is often used very loosely and unintelligently. Unless we are mistaken, if the question were put, “A ‘revival’ of *what*?”—a considerable variety of answers would be given. Personally, we would say a revival of old-fashioned piety, of practical godliness, of fuller conformity to the holy image of Christ. The “revival” we need is a deliverance from that spiritual apathy and laxity which now characterizes the average Christian, a return to self-denial and closer walking with God, a quickening of our graces, and the becoming more fruitful in the bringing forth of good works. Whether or not Scripture predicts such a revival we know not. Two things we are sure of—that whatever the future may hold for this world, God will maintain a testimony unto Himself (Psa 145:4; Mat 28:20) and preserve a godly seed on earth, until the end of human history (Psa 72:5; Isa 27:3; Mat 16:18). Second, that there must be a return to doctrinal preaching before there will be any improvement in practice.

Both the teaching of God’s Word and the testimony of ecclesiastical history testify clearly to the deep importance and great value of doctrinal instruction, and the lamentable consequences of a prolonged absence of the same. Doctrinal preaching is designed to enlighten the understanding, to instruct the mind, to inform the judgment. It is that which supplies motives to gratitude and furnishes incentives unto good works. There can be no soundness in the Faith if the fundamental articles of the Faith be not known and, in some measure at least, understood. Those fundamental articles are denominated “the first principles of the oracles of God” (Heb 5:12) or basic truths of Scripture, and are absolutely necessary unto salvation. The divine inspiration and authority of the Holy Scriptures, the ever-blessed Trinity in unity (Joh 17:3), the two natures united in the one person of the Lord Jesus Christ (1Jo 2:22 and 4:3), His finished work and all-sufficient sacrifice (Heb

10:14), the fall, resulting in our lost condition (Luk 19:10), regeneration (Joh 3:3), gratuitous justification (Gal 5:4)—these are some of the principal pillars which support the temple of truth, and without which it cannot stand. Of old, God complained, “My people are destroyed [cut off] for lack of knowledge” (Hos 4:6), and declared, “Therefore my people are gone into captivity, because they have no knowledge: and their honourable men are famished, and their multitude dried up with thirst” (Isa 5:13). When He promised, “I will give you pastors according to mine heart,” He described the same as those “which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding” (Jer 3:15), and that knowledge is communicated first and foremost by a setting forth of the glorious doctrines of divine revelation. Doctrinal Christianity is both the ground and the motive of practical Christianity, for it is *principle* and not *emotion* or impulse which is the dynamic of the spiritual life. It is *by the truth* that men are illuminated and directed, “O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles” (Psa 43:3). We are saved by a knowledge of the truth (Joh 17:3; 1Ti 2:4), and by faith therein (2Th 2:13). We are made free by the truth (Joh 8:32). We are sanctified by the truth (Joh 17:17). Our growth in grace is determined by our growth in the knowledge of God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2Pe 1:2 and 3:18). It is mercy and truth that preserve us (Psa 61:7; Pro 20:28)—“Understanding shall keep thee” (Pro 2:11).

Pertinently is the inquiry made, “If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?” (Psa 11:3). The Hebrew word for “foundations” occurs only once more in the Old Testament, namely, in Isaiah 19:10, where it is rendered “and they shall be broken in *the purposes* thereof.” As it is from our purposes that our plans and actions proceed, so it is from the “first principles” of the Word that its secondary truths are derived, and upon them both, precepts are based. “The principles of religion are the foundations on which the faith and hope of the righteous are built” (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). While those foundations cannot be totally and finally removed, yet God may suffer them to be so relatively and temporarily. In such case, the righteous should not give way to despair, but instead betake themselves unto prayer. “Some thing the righteous ones may do, and should do, when men are attempting to undermine and sap the foundation articles of religion. They should go to the throne of grace, to God in His holy temple, who knows what is doing, and plead with Him to put a stop to the designs and attempts of such subverters of foundations, and they should endeavour to build one another up on their most holy faith” (John Gill, 1697-1771).

During the past century, there was an increasingly marked departure from doctrinal preaching. Creeds and confessions of faith were disparaged and regarded as obsolete. The study of theology was largely displaced by engaging the mind with science, psychology, and sociology. The cry was raised, “Give us Christ, and not Christianity,” and many superficial minds concluded that such a demand was both a spiritual and pertinent one. In reality, it was an absurdity, an imaginary distinction without any vital difference. A Scriptural concept of Christ in His theanthropic person, His mediatorial character, His official relations to God’s elect, His redemptive work for them, can be formed only as He is contemplated in His essential Godhead, His unique humanity, His covenant headship, and as the Prophet, Priest and King of His Church. Sufficient attention has not been given to that repeated expression “the doctrine of Christ” (2Jo 1:9), which comprehends the

whole teaching of Scripture concerning His wondrous person and His so-great salvation. Nor has due weight been given to those words “the mystery of Christ” (Col 4:3), which refer to the deep things revealed of Him in the Word of truth.

The most conclusive evidences for the divine origin of Christianity, as well as the chief glory, appear in its doctrines, for they cannot be of human invention. The ineffable and incomprehensible Trinity in unity, the incarnation of the Son of God, the death of the Prince of life, that His obedience and sufferings satisfied divine justice and expiated our offences, the Holy Spirit making the believer His temple, and our union with Christ are sublime and lofty truths, holy and mysterious, which far surpass the highest flight of finite reason. There is perfect harmony in all the parts of the doctrine of Christ. Therein a full discovery is made of the manifold wisdom of God, the duties required of us, the motives which prompt thereto. It is in perceiving the distinct parts and aspects of truth, their relation to one another, their furtherance of a common cause, their magnifying of the Lord of glory, that the excellence and beauty of the whole are apparent. It is because many apprehend only detached fragments of the same that some things in it appear to be inconsistent to them. What is so much needed is a view and grasp of the whole—acquired only by diligent and persevering application.

There is much preaching, but sadly little *teaching*. It is the task of the teacher to declare all the counsel of God, to show the relation of one part of it to another, to present the whole range of truth. Thereby will the hearer’s mental horizon be widened, his sense of proportion promoted, and the beautiful harmony of the whole be demonstrated. It is his business not only to avow, but to evince, not simply to affirm, but to establish what he affirms. Of the apostle, we read that he “*reasoned* with them out of the scriptures, opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead” (Act 17:2-3). He was eminently qualified for such a task both by nature and by grace. He was not only a man of God, but a man of genius and learning. He made considerable use of his reasoning faculty. He did not ask his hearers to believe anything that he averred without evidence, but furnished *proof* of what he taught. He usually preached on the basic and essential doctrines of the Gospel, which he felt ought to be verified by plain and conclusive reasoning.

“And he *reasoned* in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded the Jews and the Greeks” (Act 18:4, 19). Because such reasoning may be abused, it does not follow that it should have no place in the pulpit. To reason fairly is to draw correct consequences from right principles, or to adduce clear and convincing arguments in support thereof. In order to reason lucidly and effectively upon the truth of a proposition, it is usually necessary to explain it, then to produce arguments in support of it, and finally to answer objections against it. That is the plan Paul generally follows, as is evident from both the Acts and his Epistles. When he preached upon the existence of God, the first and fundamental truth of all religion, he reasoned simply yet impressively, “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we *ought not to think that* the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device” (Act 17:29). “For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen” (Rom 1:20). When he enforced the doctrine of human depravity, he *proved* it first by a lengthy description of the character and conduct of the

whole heathen world, and then by quotations from the Old Testament, and concluded, "We have before *proved* both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin" (Rom 3:9).

It is the teacher's task to explain, to prove, and then to apply, for hearts are reached through the understanding and conscience. When he appeared before Felix, the apostle "reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come" so powerfully that the Roman governor "trembled" (Act 24:25). But alas, solid reasoning, exposition of Scripture, doctrinal preaching, are now largely things of the past. Many were (and still are) all for what they term *experience*, rather than a knowledge of doctrine. And today, we behold the deplorable effects of the same, for our generation lacks even a theoretical knowledge of the truth. That which was termed experimental and practical preaching displaced theological instruction, and, thus, the grand fundamentals of the Gospel were brought into contempt. No wonder that popery has made such headway in the countries once Protestant. It may be that that satanic system will yet prevail more awfully. If it does, none will be able to overthrow it by any *experiences* of their own. Nothing but sound doctrinal preaching will be of any use.

No wonder, either, that practical godliness is also at such a low ebb, for the root which produces it has been unwatered and has withered. "Where there is not the *doctrine* of Faith, the *obedience* of Faith cannot be expected....On the other hand, doctrine without practice, or a mere theoretical and speculative knowledge of things, unless reduced to practice, is of no avail....Doctrine and practice should go together, and in order both to know and to do the will of God, instruction in doctrine and practice is necessary; and the one bringing first light will lead to the other" (J. Gill). That is the order in 11 Timothy 3:16, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable [first] for doctrine, [and then] for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness." Thus, Paul exhorted Timothy, "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1Ti 4:16). So too, he enjoined Titus, "This is a faithful saying, and these things [namely the doctrines of verses 3-7] I will that thou affirm constantly, that [in order that] they which have believed in God might be careful to maintain good works" (Ti 3:8).

Alas, very, very few now preach the doctrine of Christ in all its parts and branches, in all its causes and effects, in all its bearings and dependences. Yet, there can be no better furniture for the spiritual mind than right and clear apprehensions thereof. Our preservation from error lies therein. Our spiritual fruitfulness depends thereon. Doctrine is the mould into which the mind is cast (Rom 6:17), from which it receives its impressions. As the nature of the seed sown determines what will be the harvest, so the substance of what is preached is seen in the lives of those who sit regularly under it. Where are the purity, the piety, the zeal, that close walking with God and uprightness before men, which were so pronounced in Christendom during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries? Yet the preaching of the Reformers and Puritans was principally *doctrinal*, and, under God, it produced such a love of the truth that thousands willingly suffered persecution and great privations, and hazarded their lives, rather than repudiate the doctrines and ordinances of Christ. To say it matters not what a man believes so long as his practice is good is utterly erroneous. Indifference to the truth betrays a heart that is not right with God.

It also requires to be pointed out that those men whose ministry was most owned and used of God during last century were those who followed in the steps of the Puritans. C. H. Spurgeon (1834-1892), Caesar Malan (1787-1864), Robert Murray McCheyne (1813-1843), and the great leaders of the Scottish Free Church disruption gave a prominent place to doctrinal instruction in all of their preaching. An observant eye will soon perceive that there is a distinct *spirit* which attends different types of preaching, manifesting itself more or less plainly in the regular attenders thereof. There is a solidity and soberness, a stability and godly fear seen in real Calvinists, which are not found among Arminians. There is an uprightness of character in those who espouse the truth which is lacking in those who imbibe error. Where the sovereignty of God is denied, there will be no holy awe of Him. Where the total depravity of man is not insisted upon, pride and self-sufficiency will obtain. Where the impotence of the natural man is not stressed, there will be no dependence upon the Holy Spirit. Where the holy demands of God be not maintained, there will be the absence of its effects on the heart and life.

Thus may we judge and determine the truth of preaching, "Whatsoever doctrine doth depress and humble man and advance the glory of God, is true. It answers the design of the Gospel, which all centres in this—that man is to be laid low, and God to be exalted as the chief cause. It pulls man down from his own bottom, and transfers all the glory man would challenge into the hands of God. It lays man in the dust at God's footstool. That doctrine which crosses the main design of the Gospel, and encourages pride in man, is not a spark from heaven. No flesh must glory in God's presence (1Co 1:29). The doctrine of justification by works is thrown down by the apostle with this very argument as a thunderbolt. 'Where is boasting then? It is excluded...by the law of faith' (Rom 3:27), that is by the doctrine of the Gospel. Boasting would be introduced by ascribing regeneration to nature, as much as it is excluded by denying justification by works. The doctrine of the Gospel would contradict itself to usher in boasting with one hand whilst it thrust it out with the other. Our Saviour gave this rule long ago, that the glorifying of God is the evidence of truth in persons, 'He that seeketh his glory that sent him, the same is true' (Joh 7:18). By the same, reason also in things and doctrines" (Stephen Charnock, 1628-1680).

Turning from the general to the particular, in taking up our present subject (D.V.), we shall endeavour to make good a half-promise given by us seventeen years ago. For we stated then, in these pages, that if we were spared, we hoped to devote a series of articles to this important truth. Some of our readers may be inclined to challenge the accuracy of our present title, considering that the duty of mortification pertains far more to the practical side of things than to the doctrinal. The objection would be well taken if the popular distinction were valid, but like so many of the expressions now in vogue, this one will not stand the test of Scripture. The term "doctrine" has a much wider meaning in the Word of God than is usually accorded it today. It includes very much more than the "five points" of Calvinism. Thus, we read of "the doctrine which is *according to godliness*" (1Ti 6:3), which is very much more than a species of intellectual propositions intended for the instructing of our brains, namely, the enunciation of spiritual facts and holy principles, for the warming of the heart and the regulating of our lives.

"The doctrine which is according to godliness" at once defines the *nature* of divine doctrine, intimating as it does that its design or end is to inculcate a right temper of mind

and deportment of life Godwards. It is pure and purifying. The objects which are revealed to faith are not bare abstractions which are to be accepted as true, nor even sublime and lofty concepts to be admired. They are to have a powerful effect upon our daily walk. There is no doctrine revealed in Scripture for a merely speculative knowledge, but all is to exert a powerful influence upon conduct. God's design in all that He has revealed to us is to the purifying of our affections and the transforming of our characters. The doctrine of grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world (Ti 2:11-12). By far the greater part of the doctrine (Joh 7:16) taught by Christ consisted not of the explication of mysteries, but rather that which corrected men's lusts and reformed their lives. Everything in Scripture has in view the promotion of *holiness*.

If it be an absurdity to affirm that it matters not what a man believes so long as he does that which is right, equally erroneous is it to conclude that if my creed be sound it matters little how I act. "If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel" (1Ti 5:8), for he shows himself to be devoid of natural affection. Thus it is possible to deny the Faith *by conduct* as well as by words. A neglect of performing our duty is as real a repudiation of the truth as is an open renunciation of it, for the Gospel, equally as the Law, requires children to honour their parents. Observe how that awful list of reprehensible characters mentioned in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 are said to be "contrary to sound doctrine"—opposed to its salutary nature and spiritual tendency; i.e. that conduct which the standard of God enjoins. Observe too how that the spirit of covetousness or love of money is designated an *erring* "from the faith" (1Ti 6:10). It is a species of heresy, a departure from the doctrine which is according to godliness—an awful example of which we have in the case of Judas. Mortification, then, is clearly one of the practical doctrines of Holy Writ, as we hope to show abundantly in what follows.

