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**The Lord's Prayer—Part 9**

“But deliver us from evil” (Matt. 6:13). This brings us to the end of the petitionary part of this prayer. The four requests which are for the supply of our own needs are for *providing* grace—“give us,” *pardoning* grace—“forgive us,” *preventing* grace—“lead us not into temptation,” and *preserving* grace, “deliver us.” It is to be carefully noted that in each case the pronoun is in the plural number and not the singular—“us” not “me,” for we are to supplicate not for ourselves only, but for all the members of the Household of Faith. How beautifully this emphasizes the *family* character of this prayer: it is addressed to “our Father” and it embraces all His children. On the high priest’s breastplate were inscribed the names of all the tribes of Israel—emblematic of Christ’s intercession on High. So, too, the Apostle enjoins “supplication” for *all* saints” (Eph. 6:18). Self-love shuts up the bowels of compassion, confining us to our own interests; but the love of God shed abroad in the heart makes us solicitous about our brethren.

“But deliver us from evil.” We cannot agree with those who restrict “evil” here as referring alone to Satan, though doubtless he is principally intended. The Greek may, with equal propriety, be rendered either “the evil one” or “evil things”: in fact it is translated both ways. “We are taught to pray for deliverance from all kinds, degrees, and occasions of evil; from the malice, power, subtlety, of the powers of darkness; from this evil world and all its allurements, snares, tempers, deceits; from the evil of our own hearts, that it may be restrained, subdued, and, finally extirpated; and from the evil of suffering,” etc. (Thomas Scott). This petition, then, expresses a desire to be delivered from all that is really prejudicial to us, and especially from sin, which has no good in it.

It is true that, in contradistinction from God, who is “the Holy One,” Satan is designated “the Evil One” (Matt. 5:37), “the Wicked One” (Eph. 6:16; 1 John 5:18, 19), yet it is also true that sin is evil (Rom. 12:9), the world is evil (Gal. 1:4), and our corrupt nature is evil (Matt. 12:35). Moreover, the advantages which the Devil gains over us are by means of the flesh and the world: *they* are his agents. Thus, this is a prayer for deliverance from all our spiritual enemies. It is true that we *have been* delivered from “the power of darkness” and translated into the kingdom of Christ (Col. 1:13), and therefore Satan has no lawful authority over us, nevertheless he wields a tyrannical power: though he cannot rule us, he is permitted to molest and harass. He stirs up enemies to persecute (Rev. 12, 13, etc.), he inflames our lusts (1 Chron. 21:1; 1 Cor. 7:5), he disturbs our peace (1 Peter 5:8). Hence our deep need to pray for deliverance from him.

Satan’s favourite device is to make us live in some one sin to which we are particularly inclined, and therefore we need to be in constant prayer that our natural corruptions may be mortified. When he cannot make some gross lust reign over a child of God, he labours to get him to commit some evil deed whereby the name of God will be dishonoured and His people offended, as he did in the case of David. When a believer has fallen into sin the Devil seeks to make him easy therein, so that he has no remorse for it. When God chastens us for our faults, Satan strives to make us fret against it or else drive us to despair. When he fails in these methods of attack, then he stirs up our friends and relatives to oppose, as in the case of Job. But whatever be his line of assault, prayer for deliverance must be our recourse.

Christ Himself has left us an example that we should pray this petition, for in His intercession on our behalf, we find Him saying, "I pray not that Thou shouldst take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldst keep them from the Evil One" (John 17:15). Observe how this intimates to us *the connection* between the clause we are now considering and the one which precedes it. Christ did not pray absolutely that we should be exempted from temptation, for He knew that His people must expect assaults, both from within and from without, and therefore He asked not that we should be taken out of this world, but delivered from the Evil One. To be kept from the evil of sin is a far greater mercy than to be kept from the trouble of temptation. But how far, it may be asked, has God undertaken to deliver us from evil? First, so far as it would be hurtful to our highest interests: it was for Peter's ultimate good that he was suffered to temporarily fall. Second, from its having full dominion over us, so that we shall not totally and finally apostatise. Third, by an ultimate deliverance when He removes us to Heaven.

"But deliver us from evil." First, then, this is a prayer for Divine illumination, so that we may be able to detect Satan's wiles. He who can transform himself into an angel of light is far too subtle for human wisdom to cope with: only as the Spirit graciously enlightens can we discern his snares. Second, it is a prayer for strength to resist his attacks, for he is much too powerful for us to withstand in our own might—only as we are energized by the Spirit shall we be kept from willfully yielding to temptation or taking pleasure in the sins we commit. Third, it is a prayer for grace to mortify our lusts, for only in proportion as we deny our internal corruptions shall we refuse the external solicitations to sin: we cannot justly throw the blame on Satan while we give license to the evil of our hearts—salvation from the love of sin ever precedes deliverance from its dominion.

Fourth, this is a prayer for repentance when we do succumb. Sin has a fatal tendency to deaden our sensibilities and harden our hearts, and naught but Divine grace can free us from unabashed indifference and work in us a godly sorrow for our transgressions: the very word "deliver us" in this connection implies that we are as deeply plunged into sin as a beast in the mire, which must be forcibly dragged out. Fifth, it is a prayer for the removal of guilt from the conscience. When true repentance has been communicated, the soul is bowed down with shame before God, and there is no relief till the Spirit sprinkles the conscience afresh with the cleansing blood of Christ. Sixth, it is a prayer that we may be so delivered that our souls are restored again to communion with God. Seventh, it is a prayer that He will overrule our falls to His glory and our lasting good. To have a sincere desire for these things is a signal favour from God.

What we *pray* for we must endeavour to *practice*. We do but mock God if we ask Him to deliver us from evil and then trifle with sin or recklessly rush into the place of temptation. Prayer and watchfulness must never be severed. We must make it our special care to mortify our lusts, to make no provision for the flesh, to avoid every appearance of evil, to resist the Devil steadfastly in the faith, to love not the world nor the things that are in it. The more our character be formed and our conduct regulated by the Holy Word of God, the more shall we be enabled to overcome evil with good. Let us labour diligently to maintain a good conscience; let us seek to live each day as though we knew it were our last one on earth; let us set our affections on things above, and then may we sincerely pray, "deliver us from evil."—A.W.P.

## THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

### 4. *The Beatitudes*: Matthew 5:1-11.

In these Beatitudes the Lord Jesus delineates the distinguishing characteristics and privileges of those who are “His disciples indeed,” or the birthmarks by which the true subjects of His kingdom may be identified. This is only another way of saying that His design was to make known the character of those upon whom the Divine benediction rests, or that He here revealed who are the truly happy. Looking at these Beatitudes from another angle we may regard them as furnishing a description of the nature of true happiness, and as propounding sundry rules by which it is attained. Very different, indeed, is Christ’s teaching here from the thoughts and the theories which obtain in the carnal mind. Instead of attributing genuine felicity unto the possession of outward things, He affirmed that it consists in the possession and cultivation of spiritual graces. It was God incarnate pouring contempt on the wisdom of this world and showing how radically opposed are its concepts to the Truth.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7). Grossly have these words been perverted by merit-mongers. Those who insist that the Bible teaches salvation by works appeal to this verse, among others, in support of their pernicious error. But nothing could be less to their purpose, for there is not a word in it which affords the slightest support to their fatal delusion. Our Lord was not here describing the foundation on which rests the sinner’s hope of receiving mercy from God, but was tracing the spiritual features of His own people, among which mercifulness is a prominent one. His evident meaning was: mercy is an indispensable trait in that holy character which God has inseparably connected with the enjoyment of that happiness—both here and hereafter—which is the product of His own sovereign kindness.

The place occupied by this particular Beatitude in the series furnishes a sure key to its interpretation. The first four may be regarded as describing the *initial* exercises of heart in one who has been awakened by the Spirit, whereas the next four treat of the *subsequent* fruits. In the preceding verse the soul is seen hungering and thirsting after Christ, and then filled by Him—whereas here, we are shown the first effect and evidence of this. Having received mercy from the Lord, the saved sinner now exercises mercy unto others. It is not that God requires us to be merciful in order to obtain His mercy—that would be to overthrow the whole scheme of grace—but having been made the recipient of His wondrous grace, I cannot now but act graciously toward others. That which is signified by “they shall obtain mercy” will come before us in the sequel.

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.” First, let us endeavour to define the nature of this mercy. This mercifulness upon which the Divine approbation rests is a holy compassion of soul, whereby one is moved to pity and go to the relief of another in misery. In saying that it is a compassion of soul, we mean that it causes its possessor to make the case of another his own, so that he is grieved by it, for when our heart is really touched by the state of another, we are stirred within. “It is an aversion to everything harsh, cruel, oppressive or injurious; a propensity to pity, alleviate or remove the miseries of mankind; an unwillingness to increase personal emolument or indulgence by rendering others uneasy; a willingness to forego personal ease, interest or gratification; to make others easy and happy” (Thomas Scott).

Mercifulness, then, is a gracious disposition toward our fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians. It is a spirit of kindness and benevolence which sympathizes with the suf-

ferings of the afflicted, so that we weep with those that weep. It ennobles its possessor so that he tempers justice with mercy, and scorns the taking of revenge. But it is a *holy* disposition in contrast from that foolish sentimentality which flouts the requirements of justice, and which inclines many to sympathize with those in deserved misery. That is a false and unholy mercy which petitions the powers that be to cancel or modify a just and fully-merited sentence which has been passed upon some flagrant offender. Therefore are we told, “And of some have compassion, making a difference” (Jude 22)—King Saul defied this principle when he spared Agag. It is also a holy compassion as opposed to that partiality which is generous to some and harsh to others.

This mercifulness has not its roots in anything in the natural man. True, there are some who make no profession of being Christians in whom we often find not a little kindness of disposition, sympathy for the suffering, and a readiness to forgive those who have wronged them—yet is it merely instinctive, and though amiable there is nothing spiritual in it—instead of being subject to Divine authority it is often opposed to God’s law. That which Christ here inculcated and commended is very different from and vastly superior to natural amiability: it is such compassion as *God* approves of, which is a fruit of His Holy Spirit, and is commanded in His Word. It is the result of Christ living in us. Was He moved with compassion? Did He weep with the mourner? Was He patient with the dull-witted? Then if He indwells me, that same disposition, however imperfectly manifested, must be reproduced.

This mercy is something more than a feeling: it is *an operative principle*. It not only stirs the heart, but it moves the hand to render help unto those in need, for the one cannot be severed from the other. So far from it being a well shut up or a fountain sealed, this mercy is a copious source of acts of beneficence, from which issue streams of blessing. It does not exhaust itself in profitless words, but is accompanied by helpful deeds. “But whoso hath this world’s goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?” (1 John 3:17). This verse makes it clear that no work of mercy is shown to those in misery except it proceeds from inward compassion. Thus we see what is the “mercy” which is here mentioned: it is that which exerts itself in doing good, being a fruit of the love of God shed abroad in the heart.

This mercy may, through walking after the flesh, for a time be checked and choked, but taking the general tenor of a Christian’s character and the main trend in his life, it is seen to be an unmistakable trait of the new man. “The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again; but the righteous showeth mercy, and giveth” (Psa. 37:21). It was “mercy” in Abraham, after he had been wronged by his nephew, which caused him to go after and secure the deliverance of Lot. It was “mercy” on the part of Joseph, after his brethren had so grievously mistreated him, which moved him to freely forgive them. It was “mercy” in Moses, after Miriam had rebelled against him and the Lord had smitten her with leprosy, which moved him to cry, “Heal her now, O God, I beseech Thee” (Num. 12:13). It was “mercy” in David which caused him to spare the life of his arch-enemy when the wicked Saul was in his hands. In solemn contrast, of Judas, we read “he remembered not to show mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy Man” (Psa. 109:16).

Were we sermonizing Matthew 5:7 our next division would be *the duties* of mercy, which are answerable to the miseries of those we should relieve, as the form and degree of its manifestation is regulated by our own station and circumstances. This mercy re-

gards not merely the bodies of men but also their *souls*, and here again it is sharply distinguished from that natural and instinctive kind which pities and ministers to the temporal needs of sufferers, but has no concern for their eternal prospects. The preacher needs to carefully heed this fifth Beatitude: so, too, the employer and the tradesman. But we must dismiss this branch of our subject by calling attention to, “he that showeth mercy, with *cheerfulness*” (Rom. 12:8), which is what gives chief value to the service rendered. If God loves a cheerful giver, it is equally true that He takes notice of the spirit in which we respond to His precepts.

A word now on *the reward*: “for they shall obtain mercy,” which as the older theologians pointed out is not the reward of condignity (wholly deserved), but of congruity. This gives not the least countenance to the horrible error of Rome, that by almsdeeds we can make satisfaction to God for our sins. Our acts of mercy are not meritorious in the sight of God: had that been the case, Christ had said, “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain *justice*,” for what is meritorious is due reward by right. Our text has nothing to do with salvation matters, but enunciates a principle pertaining to the governmental ways of God, by which we reap what we sow and have measured again to us according as we have meted out to others (Matt. 7:2). “He that followeth after righteousness and mercy findeth life, righteousness, and honour” (Prov. 21:21).

“For they shall obtain mercy.” First, there is an *inward benefit*. The one who shows mercy to others gains thereby: “the merciful man doeth good to his own soul” (Prov. 11:17). There is a personal satisfaction in the exercise of pity and benevolence, which the fullest gratification of the selfish man is not to be compared with: “he that hath mercy on the poor, *happy* is he” (Prov. 14:21). Second, he reaps mercy at the hands of his fellows: the overruling providence of God causes him to be dealt with mercifully by others. Third, he receives mercy from *God*: “with the merciful Thou wilt show Thyself merciful” (Psa. 18:25)—contrast “he shall have judgment without mercy that hath showed no mercy” (James 2:13). Mercy will be shown to the merciful in the Day to come: see 2 Timothy 1:16, 18; Jude 21. They let us prayerfully heed the exhortations of Romans 12:10; Galatians 6:2; Colossians 3:12.

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8). This is another of the Beatitudes which has been grossly perverted by the enemies of the Lord: those who have, like their predecessors the Pharisees, posed as the champions of the Truth and boasted of a superior sanctity to that confessed by the true people of God. All through this Christian era there have been poor deluded souls who have claimed an entire purification of the old man, or have insisted that God has so completely renewed them that the carnal nature has been eradicated, and in consequence they not only commit no sins, but have no sinful desires or thoughts. But God tells us, “If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” Of course such people appeal to the Scriptures in support of their vain delusion, applying to experience verses which describe the legal benefits of the Atonement, or by wresting such an one as is now before us.

That purity of heart does *not* mean sinlessness of life is clear from the inspired record of the history of all God’s saints. Noah got drunk, Abraham equivocated, Moses disobeyed God; Job cursed the day of his birth; Elijah fled in terror from Jezebel; Peter denied Christ. Yes, perhaps someone will exclaim, but all these were before Christianity was established. True, but it has also been the same since then. Where shall we go to find a Christian of superior attainments to those of the Apostle Paul? And what was *his* ex-

perience? Read Romans 7 and see. When he would do good, evil was present with him (v. 21); there was a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin (v. 23). He did, with the mind, serve the Law of God, nevertheless with the flesh he served the law of sin (v. 25). Ah, Christian reader, one of the most conclusive evidences that we *do* possess a pure heart is to be conscious of, and burdened with, the impurity which *still indwells us*.

“Blessed are the pure in heart.” Here again we see the Lord exposing the thoughts of the natural man, who errs greatly in his ideas of what constitutes real blessedness. Therein He refuted the Pharisees, who contented themselves with a species of external ceremonialism or mere outward holiness, failing to realize that God requires “Truth in the *inward parts*” (Psa. 51:6). Very solemn and searching is this sixth Beatitude, for it equally condemns most of that which now passes for genuine religion in Christendom. How many today rest satisfied with a *head* religion, supposing that all is well if their creed be sound; and how many more have nothing better than a *hand* religion—busily engaged in what they term “Christian service”? “But the LORD looketh on the *heart*” (1 Sam. 16:7), which includes the mind, conscience, affections and will.

How is purity of heart effected? for by nature the heart of fallen man is totally depraved and corrupt, deceitful above all things and desperately wicked (Jer. 17:9). How can it be otherwise when each of us must make the humiliating confession, “Behold I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me” (Psa. 51:5). This purity of heart is by no means to be restricted to inward chastity or simplicity—being without guile and deceit; but has a far more comprehensive meaning and scope. The heart of the Christian is made pure by a fourfold operation of the Holy Spirit. First, by imparting a holy nature at the new birth. Second, by bestowing a saving faith which unites its possessor to a holy Christ. Third, by sprinkling him with the precious blood of Christ, which purges his conscience. Fourth, by a protracted process of sanctification so we, through His aid, mortify the flesh and live unto God. In consequence thereof, the believer has a sincere desire and resolution not to sin against God in thought or word or deed, but to please Him in all things.

In what measure is the heart of the Christian now made pure? Only in part during this life, relatively and not absolutely. “The believer’s understanding *is in part* purified from darkness, his judgment from error, his will from rebellion, his affections from enmity, avarice, pride, sensuality” (Thomas Scott). The work of Divine grace in the soul is begun here, but it is only completed hereafter (Phil. 1:6). We are not wholly perfected, having received only “the *firstfruits* of the Spirit” (Rom. 8:23). Observe carefully the tense of the verb in Acts 15:9: it is not “purified their hearts by faith,” but “purifying their hearts by faith”—a continuous experience. So again—“He saved us by the washing of regeneration and (not “renewal” but) *renewing* of the Holy Spirit” (Titus 3:5). Consequently it is written, “in many things we all stumble” (James 3:2 R.V.). Yet it is our bounden duty to use every legitimate means of purification: the daily denying of self, sincere confession of our sins, walking in the paths of righteousness.

What is this “purity of heart”? A question which requires a somewhat more definite answer than has been given above, where we have intimated that this sixth Beatitude contemplates both the new heart or nature received at regeneration and the transformation of character which is the effect a Divine work of grace in the soul. Spiritual purity may be defined as undivided affections, sincerity and genuineness, godly simplicity. It is the op-

posite of subtlety and duplicity, for genuine piety lays aside not only hatred and malice, but guile and hypocrisy. It is not sufficient to be pure in words and outward deportment: purity of desires, motives, intents, are what should and in the main do characterize the child of God. Here, then, is a most important test for each professing Christian to apply to himself: have I been freed from the dominion of hypocrisy? Are my motives pure and intentions genuine? Are my affections set upon things above? Do I meet with the Lord's people to commune with Him or to be seen of men?

A "pure heart" is one which has a pure Object before it, being attracted by "the beauty of holiness." It is one in which the fear of the Lord has been implanted and the love of God shed abroad, and therefore it hates what He hates and loves what He loves. The purer the heart be, the more conscious it becomes of and the more it grieves over indwelling filth. A pure heart is one which makes conscience of foul thoughts, vile imaginations, and evil desires. It is one that mourns over pride and discontent, unbelief and coldness of affection, and weeps in secret over unholiness. Alas, how little is this *inward* purity esteemed today: the great majority of professors content themselves with a mere form of godliness, a shadow of the reality. The heaviest burden of a pure heart is the discovery that such an ocean of unclean waters still indwells him, constantly casting up mire and dirt, fouling all he does.

Consider now the attendant blessing: "The pure in heart shall *see God*." Once again we would remind our readers that the promises attached to these Beatitudes have both a present and a future fulfillment; notably is this the case with the one now before us. Corresponding to the fact that the Christian's purity of heart is only in part in this life but perfected in the life to come, is the experience that, "Now we see through a glass darkly, but then face to face, now I know in part, but then shall I know even as also I am known" (1 Cor. 13:12). To "see God" is to be brought nigh to Him (for we cannot see an object which is a vast distance from us), to be introduced into intimate intercourse with Him, which is the consequence of having the thick cloud of our transgressions blotted out, for it was our iniquities which separated us from Him (Isa. 59:2). We need scarcely say that it is a spiritual sight and not a corporeal one, an heart-knowledge of and communion with God.

The pure in heart possess spiritual discernment and with the eyes of their understanding they obtain clear views of the Divine character and perceive the excellency of His attributes. When the eye is single, the whole body is full of light. It is by faith God is beheld. To "see God" also has the force of *enjoy* Him, and for that, a pure heart is indispensable. That which pollutes the heart and beclouds the vision of a Christian is unjudged evil, for when any sin is "allowed," communion with God is broken, and can only be restored by genuine repentance and unsparing confession. Since, then, the privilege of seeing God is dependent upon the maintenance of heart purity, how essential it is that we give earnest heed to the exhortations of Isaiah 1:16; 2 Corinthians 7:1; 1 Peter 3:15. O to be able to say, "I have set the LORD always before me" (Psa. 16:8)!

"In the Truth, the faith of which purifies the heart, they 'see God,' for what is that Truth but a manifestation of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ—an illustrious display of the combined radiance of Divine holiness and Divine benignity! . . . They who are pure in heart 'see God' in this way, even in the present world; and in the future state their knowledge of God will become far more extensive and their fellowship with

Him far more intimate. To borrow the words of the Psalmist, we shall, 'Behold His face in righteousness, and shall be satisfied when we awake in His likeness' (Psa. 17:15). Then, and not till then, will the full meaning of these words be understood 'the pure in heart shall see God' " (J. Brown).—A.W.P.



## THE LIFE OF DAVID.

### 83. *His Sacred Song.*

In this Song David is celebrating the wondrous deliverances from his many enemies which he had experienced by the goodness and power of Jehovah. But unless we carefully bear in mind his particular viewpoint therein, we shall utterly fail to contemplate those experiences in their proper perspective. David was not here furnishing an outline of his entire history, but instead, confines himself to one particular phase thereof. Because they lay *outside* his present scope, he says nothing about his own sad failures and falls, rather does he restrict himself to what the Lord had wrought for and by him. There *are* passages, many of them, both in the historical books, and in the Psalms, wherein we hear him confessing his sins, and bewailing his transgressions; but in this Song he recounts his victories over and vanquishing of his foes, not by his own prowess, but by Divine enablement.

In what has just been pointed out there is a most important lesson for the believer to take to heart. If there be times (as there certainly are) when the Christian may feelingly appropriate to his own use the mournful language of Psalm 38 and the abasing confessions of Psalm 51, it is equally true that there are times when he should employ the triumphant tones of Psalm 18, which is almost identical with 2 Samuel 22. In other words, if there be occasions when the saint can only sigh and groan, there are also seasons when he should sing and celebrate his triumphs, for David has left us an example of the one as truly as he has of the other. Nor should such singing be limited to the days of our "first love," the joy of our espousal. This Song was composed by David in his declining years: as he reviewed his checkered career, despite his own failings and falls, he perceived how, after all, he was "more than conqueror through Him that loved him" (Rom. 8:37).

If on the one hand there be a large class of Satan-deceived professors who are fond of trumpeting forth their own achievements and of advertising their fancied victories over sin, there is on the other hand a considerable proportion of the Lord's people who are so occupied with their downfalls and defeats, that they are sadly remiss in recounting the Lord's triumphs in them and by them. This ought not to be: it is robbing the Lord of that which is His due; it is a morbidity which causes us to lose all sense of proportion; it conveys to others an erroneous conception of the Christian life. It is a false humility which shuts our eyes to the workings of Divine grace within us. It is the presence and exercise of a true humility that takes notice of our successes and conquests so long as it is careful to lay all the trophies of them at the Lord's feet, and ascribe to Him alone the honour and glory of the same.

Let those who are engaged in fighting the good fight of faith remember that this is not the work of a day, but the task of a *lifetime*. Now in a protracted war success does not uniformly attend the efforts of that side which is ultimately victorious. Far from it. It usually falls out that many a minor skirmish is lost; yea, and sometimes a major one too, before the issue is finally determined. At times, even the main army may have to fall back before the fierce onslaughts of the enemy. There are severe losses, sad disappointments, heavy sacrifices—the receiving of many wounds—before success is ultimately achieved. Why do we forget these well known facts when it comes to our spiritual warfare? They apply with equal force thereto. Even under the inspired leadership of Joshua, Israel did not conquer and capture Canaan in a day, nor in a year; nor without drinking the bitters of defeat as well as tasting the sweets of victory.

We are well aware that one of the principal hindrances against our rendering to God the praise which is His due, for the victories He has given us over our enemies, is a sense of *present* defeat. But if we are to wait till that be removed, we shall have to wait till we reach Heaven before we sing this Song, and obviously that is wrong, for it is recorded for us to use here on earth. Ah, says the desponding reader: others may use it, but it is not suitable to such a sorry failure as I am; it would be a mockery for me to praise God for my triumphs over the Enemy. Not so fast, dear friend: ponder these questions. Are you not still out of Hell?—many of your former companions are not! Though perhaps tempted to do so, has Satan succeeded in causing you to totally apostatise from God?—he has many others! Have you been deceived and carried away by fatal errors?—millions have! Then what cause have you to thank God for such deliverances!

As the believer carefully reviews the whole of his career, while on the one hand he finds much to be humbled at in *himself*, yet on the other hand he discerns not a little to be elated over in the *Lord*. Thus it was with David. Though there had been tragic failures, there were also blessed successes, and it was these he celebrated in this Song. After affirming that God had acted righteously in favouring him as He had (2 Sam. 22:20-28), the purely personal tone is again resumed and he bursts forth into joyful strains of praise. The leading difference between the second half of this Song from its first is easily ascertained by attention to its details: in the former, David dwells on God's delivering him *from* his enemies (see vv. 3, 17). In the latter half David recounts his victories *over* his enemies: in each the glory is ascribed alone to Jehovah. In the first David was passive—God's arm alone was his deliverance; in the second he is active, the conquering king, whose arm is strengthened for victory by God.

"For Thou art my lamp, O LORD; and the LORD will lighten my darkness" (2 Sam. 22:29). This is the verse which links together the two halves of the Song. At first sight the force of its connection is not very apparent, yet a little reflection will ascertain its general bearing. David's path had been both a difficult and a dangerous one. At times it was so intricate and perplexing, he had been quite unable to see whither it was leading. More than once the shadows had been so dark that he had been quite at a loss to discern what lay ahead. Once and again there had been much which tended to cast a heavy gloom upon David's soul, but the Lord had graciously relieved the tension, supplying cheer in the blackest hour. It is to be remembered that with the Orientals, the "lamp" is used for *comfort* as much as for illumination—many of them will deprive themselves of food in order to buy oil; which helps us to understand the figure here used.

"For Thou art my lamp, O LORD." This is the grand recourse of the believer in seasons of trial: he can turn unto One to whom the poor worldling is a total stranger; nor will he turn to Him in vain, for God is "a very present help in trouble." It is then that the oppressed and depressed saint proves Him to be "the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort" (2 Cor. 1:3). Though his night be not turned into day, yet the welcome radiance of God's countenance affords such cheer as to sustain the trembling heart in the loneliest and saddest hour. In the cave of Adullam, in the hold of Rephaim, in the vastness of Mahanaim, the Lord had been his solace and support; and now that old age drew near, David could bear witness, "Thou art my lamp, O LORD." And is not this the testimony of both writer and reader? Have we not abundant cause to witness to the same glorious fact!

“And the LORD *will* lighten my darkness” (2 Sam. 22:29). This was the language of faith and hope: He who had so often done this for David in the past, would not fail him in the future. No matter how dense the gloom would be, there should be a break in the clouds. That which is incomprehensible to the natural man is often made intelligible to the spiritual. Loss of health, financial disaster, or family bereavement: yes, but “the secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him” (Psa. 25:14). Divine providence is often a mysterious deep, but God is his own interpreter, and He will make plain what before was obscure. Particularly is this the case with the believer’s being plagued so fiercely and so frequently by his enemies. Why should his peace be so rudely disturbed, his joy dampened, his hopes shattered? Why should the conflict so often go against him and humiliating defeat be his portion? Here too we can confidently affirm, “the LORD will lighten my darkness”: if not now, in the hereafter.

“For by Thee I have run through a troop: by my God have I leaped over a wall” (2 Sam. 22:30). Occurring as they do in the second half of this Psalm, we do not (as some) regard these words as referring to David’s escapes from his enemies, but to his vanquishing of them. It was not that he was almost surrounded by hostile forces and then managed to find a loophole, or that he was driven into some stockade and then climbed over it; rather that he successfully attacked them. Instead of picturing the difficulties from which David extricated himself, we consider this verse portrays his foes as occupying two different positions: in the open field and sheltering behind some battlement; and his prevailing over them in each case. The leading thought seems to be that the Christian warrior must expect to have a taste of *every form* of fighting, for at times he is required to take the offensive, as well as the defensive. A “troop” of difficulties may impede his progress; a “wall” of opposition obstruct his success: by Divine enablement he is to master both.

“As for God, His way is perfect” (v. 31). What a glorious testimony was this from one who had been so severely tried by His adverse providences! Severely as he had been buffeted, rough as was the path he often had to tread, David had not a word of criticism to make against God for the way He had dealt with him. So far from it, he vindicated and magnified Him. What a resting-place it is for the heart to be assured that all the Divine actions are regulated by unerring wisdom and righteousness, infinite goodness and patience, inflexible justice and tender mercy. “The Word of the LORD is tried” (v. 31), like silver refined in the furnace. Tens of thousands of His people have, in all ages and circumstances, tested and proved the sufficiency of God’s Word for themselves: they have found its doctrine satisfying to the soul, its precepts to be in their best interests to follow, its promises absolutely reliable. “He is a buckler to all them that trust in Him” (v. 31). The covenant-keeping Jehovah is a sure Shield of protection to His warring people.

“For who is God, save the LORD? and who is a rock, save our God?” (v. 32). There is none to be compared with Him, for there is none like unto Him: all others worshipped as deities are but counterfeits and pretenders. “Who is like unto Thee, O LORD, among the gods? who is like Thee, glorious in holiness, fearful in praises, doing wonders?” (Exo. 15:11). Who else, save the living and true God, creates, sustains, and governs all creatures? He is perfect in every attribute, excellent in every action. The opening “for” may be connected both with verse 30 and verse 31: “by my God have I leaped over a wall,” for there is none else enables like Him; “He is a buckler to all that trust in Him,” for He, and He alone, is reliable. Where can lasting hopes be fixed? where is real strength to be

found? where is refuge to be obtained? In the Rock of Ages, for He is immovable and immutable, steadfast and strong.

“God is my strength and power; and He maketh my way perfect” (2 Sam 22:33). By Him David had been energized and enabled, upheld and preserved, both as a pilgrim and as a warrior. How often the Christian soldier has grown weary and faint—then fresh vigour was imparted—“strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man.” How often the task before us seemed impossible, the difficulties insurmountable, when such might was ours that we mounted up with wings as eagles and ran and were not weary. Nor can we take any credit for this to ourselves: God Himself is our strength and power, both physically and spiritually. “He maketh my way perfect,” by which we understand David to mean that his course had been successful. There is a real sense in which each believer may make these words his own: because his steps are ordered by the Lord and because his path shines more and more unto “the perfect day.”

“He maketh my feet like hinds’ feet; and setteth me upon my high places” (v. 34). “As hinds climb the craggy rocks and stand firm upon the slippery summit of the precipice, so David had been upheld in the most slippery paths and advanced to his present elevated station by the providence and grace of God” (Thomas Scott). The feet of certain animals are specially designed and adapted to tricky and treacherous ground. A threefold line of thought is suggested by the figure of this verse. First, God fits the believer for the position which He has appointed him to occupy, no matter how honourable and hazardous. Second, God furnishes him with alacrity and agility when the King’s business requires haste, for speed as well as sureness of foot characterizes the hind. Third, God protects and secures him in the most dangerous places: “He will keep the feet of His saints” (1 Sam. 2:9).

“He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms” (2 Sam. 22:35). Whatever skill he possessed in the use of weapons, David, gratefully ascribed it unto Divine instruction. The general principle here is of wide application: the artisan, the musician, the housewife, should thankfully acknowledge that it is God who has imparted dexterity to his or her fingers. In its higher significance this verse has reference to Divine wisdom being imparted to the Christian warrior in the *use* of the armour which grace has provided for him. As it is in the natural, so it is in the spiritual: weapons, whether the offensive or defensive ones, are of little avail to us till we know how to employ them to advantage. “Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day” (Eph. 6:13), not only means appropriate to yourself the panoply which God furnished, but also look to Him for guidance and help in the use of the same. The second half of our verse seems to indicate that David, like Samson, was at times endued with more than ordinary strength.

“Thou hast also given me the shield of Thy salvation” (2 Sam. 22:36). Here we find David looking higher than the material and temporal blessings which God had so freely granted him, to those special favours reserved for His own elect. There are common gifts of Providence bestowed upon the wicked and the righteous alike, but there are riches of grace communicated only to the high favourites of Heaven, that infinitely surpass the former. What are bodily deliverances worth if the soul be left to perish! What does protection from human foes amount to, if the Devil be permitted to bring about our eternal destruction! David was not only granted the former, but the latter also. Here is a plain hint that we should seek after the higher meaning throughout this Song and interpret

spiritually. Let it be noted that this is not the only place in it where God's "salvation" is referred to: see verses 47, 51.

"And Thy gentleness hath made me great" (v. 36). The Hebrew word which is here rendered "gentleness," is one of considerable latitude and has been variously translated. The Septuagint has "Thy discipline," or Fatherly chastening; another gives "Thy goodness," referring to the benevolence of God's actions; still another, and more literally, "Thy condescension." They all amount to much the same thing. This acknowledgment of David's is very blessed: so far was he from complaining at the Divine providences and accusing God of having dealt with him harshly, he extols God's perfections for the pains that had been taken with him. David owns that God had acted toward him like a tender parent, tempering the rod with infinite patience; he affirmed that God had graciously sanctified his afflictions to him. Though he had been raised from the sheepcote to the throne and had become great in prosperity and power, a successful conqueror and ruler, he fails not to give God all the glory for it.—A.W.P.

## THE DIVINE COVENANTS.

### 7. *The Messianic.*

We continue our contemplation of the measures and means ordained by God for the actual communication of the blessings of the Covenant. First and foremost among these was the appointing of His Son to the Mediatorial office, involving, of course, His becoming Man. The Covenant itself is a dispensation of free promises of grace to guilty and condemned sinners; the measures to give effect unto these promises are the *terms* on which the Divine intercourse with sinners is alone possible; and the *means* are that by which true fellowship with God is established and maintained. As we have said, first among these measures and means was the ordination of Christ to the Mediatorial office, and to equip Him for the discharge thereof during the days of His humiliation. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit (Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38). Thus was He furnished for all the exigencies of the stupendous undertaking upon which He entered, an undertaking that is executed by the exercise of His prophetic, priestly, and royal functions.

By the successful conclusion of His earthly mission and work, Christ laid a sure foundation for the recovery of God's fallen people and for their true fellowship with Him, yet more was still needed for the actualizing of the Divine purpose of grace. As it is through Christ all its blessings are conveyed, so it is by Him the Covenant *is administered*. Consequently, upon His exaltation to the right hand of God, He received a further and higher anointing, obtaining the promise of the Father in the gift of the Spirit, to be by Him dispensed to His Church at His will: see Acts 2:33; Hebrews 1:9; Rev. 3:1. Thus is He effectually equipped to secure the salvation of all His people. He has been exalted to be "a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). He is endowed with "all power in Heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). He "must reign till He hath put all enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25). God has assured Him that "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and shall be satisfied" (Isa. 53:11).

The administration of the Covenant in the actual application of its blessings, and in securing, beyond the possibility of the slightest failure, its ordained results, is an essential part of the mediatorial work of Christ. In order to this, His exaltation to the right hand of the Majesty on high, in the exercise of sovereign power, has immediate respect. His Cross was but the prelude to His crown. The latter was not only the appointed and appropriate reward of the former, but having begun the work of salvation by His death, to Him was reserved the honour of completing it by His reigning power. "God raised Him from the dead and set Him at His own right hand . . . and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the Church which is His body" (Eph. 1:19-23). The salvation of the Church, and the unlimited power and authority with which the Redeemer is now entrusted, are indispensable to its successful attainment.

The administration of the Covenant by the Mediator as bearing on the salvation of sinners is a subject of vast importance. Christ now reigns, and nothing is more consoling and stabilizing than a deep conviction of this fact. His rule is not an imaginary one, but a reality; His reign is not figurative, but personal. He is now on the throne, and is exercising the power and authority committed to Him as the Messiah, in the complex constitution of His person, for the accomplishment of His people's salvation. But not only is this now denied by those who imagine that Christ's personal reign is as yet entirely future, it is most feebly grasped by many of those who profess to believe that the Saviour is already on the Mediatorial throne. It is one thing to admit it in words, and another to act

thereon and enjoy the living power of it. It is the holy privilege of the Christian to have personal dealings with One who is invested with supreme sovereignty, and yet at the same time ever has his best interests at heart.

From the period of His ascension, the royal supremacy of Christ was distinctly recognized and frankly owned by all the Apostles. They steadfastly believed in Him as their King and their God—ever accessible, ever near to them. They sought His direction in duty, and under His authority they acted. They relied upon His grace for the performance of their work, and to Him they ascribed their success. The assurance of His presence was a vital consideration with them: it strengthened their faith, energized their service, sustained them in their afflictions, and gave them victory over their enemies. Of this, their writings afford abundant evidence. It is impossible to peruse them attentively without perceiving that a living, ever-present Saviour, invested with mediatorial power and glory, was their life and strength and joy. And with this, all healthy Christian experience, ever since the day of the Apostles, thoroughly coincides.

The government of Christ is administered by a wisely adapted system of means, appointed and directed by Himself. Chief among these means, in the matter of salvation, are His Word and His *Spirit*, the former containing all that it is necessary for us to know in order to our spiritual deliverance. It reveals the character of the Lord God, the nature of the relation He sustains to us, the things He requires of us, and the principles on which He will deliver us. It depicts what we are as fallen creatures, what sin is, and what are its wages. It unfolds the Divine method of salvation through the sacrifice and mediation of the Son, His all-sufficiency for the work assigned Him, the way in which we become interested in its blessings, and the character of that obedience which, as the subjects of His grace, we must render to Him.

As a means, *the Word* is perfect for its purpose: it is fully and admirably fitted to produce the most practical effect on all who are brought to understand it. But the Scripture declares, and innumerable facts echo its testimony, that this body of Truth meets with such resistance from sinful men that no mere means can ever remove—that plain as its statements are, and satisfactory and conclusive its evidence, sinners naturally have not eyes to see nor hearts to receive. Fallen men are so utterly depraved, there is such an aversion in their hearts to all that is holy, that had they been left to themselves, revelation with all its merciful disclosures, must have been given in vain. It is here that the work of *the Spirit* comes in: a gracious provision of Christ's to meet man's otherwise hopeless malady. By His power, the Spirit of Christ dispels the darkness of the understanding and subdues the enmity of the heart. This He does by regenerating us, which imparts a capacity for receiving and loving the Truth.

When a sinner, after a career of heedless insensibility to the claims of God, is awakened to a consciousness of his guilt and danger, brought under deep and painful conviction, and after exercise of heart more or less protracted, is led to accept the mercy of the Gospel and to find peace in Christ, it is in every instance a work of Divine grace, the fruit of the Spirit's operation. True, every conviction is not the proof of a saving work, for some proceed from natural conscience or are aroused by some special providence; it is the *result* and not the degree of suffering attending them, which is the only sure criterion of their saving nature. Those convictions alone are gracious which truly *humble* the sinner, leading to the renunciation of all self-righteous dependence, inducing him to justify God in his condemnation and take the blame of his sins upon himself, and leave him a

conscious suppliant for undeserved mercy. This is a state of heart which the Spirit of God alone can produce.

The actual reception of Christ in order that salvation may be a conscious possession and enjoyment, is by faith, and that faith is obviously the consequence of the spiritual and radical change which has passed on the heart. We say, "obvious," for a proud and impenitent heart cannot savingly believe (Matt. 21:32), any more than one who is yet a rebel can surrender to the Lordship of Christ and take His yoke upon him. There can be no communion between light and darkness, no fellowship between Christ and Belial. While the heart remains hard and unbroken the Word obtains no entrance therein, as our Lord's parable of the Sower makes unmistakably plain. The faith which saves is one that receives Christ as He is presented in the Word, namely, as One who abhors self-righteousness, hates sin, yet is full of compassion to those who are sick of sin and long to be healed by Him. Of such faith the Holy Spirit is the Author in every instance.

In His administration of the Covenant, then, Christ fulfills its promises by means of the ministry of the Word, under the agency of the Spirit. God's people are effectually called by His grace: by faith they accept His mercy and surrender to His will. The effectual call concerns their salvation, for it is a call to His kingdom and glory, this being its specific design. From the moment that spiritual principles and gracious affections exist in the heart, in however feeble a form, salvation commences—and we may rest fully assured that everyone in whom this good work is begun by the Spirit will continue and persevere in the course on which they have entered, until their salvation is completed, and present grace passes into future glory. Between the first incipient manifestation of grace in the heart and finished redemption in the everlasting blessedness of Heaven, there is an intimate, and by Divine appointment, a necessary and sure connection. The very nature of the Covenant insures this, for its blessings are entirely spiritual, providing for permanent relations with God.

Between the condition of Adam in a state of innocence, and renewed and believing saints, there is a vast difference. The former stood in his own righteousness, and there was no guarantee against his defection. He did fall, even when placed in the most favourable circumstance, from continued obedience. If, then, believers, now, with indwelling sin and all the infirmities which still cleave to them, amidst the manifold forms of temptation surrounding them—things which Adam in his purity never knew—have no higher security than he had, what could prevent their inevitable apostasy and destruction? The effects of Divine grace and the faithfulness of the Redeemer are pledged for their safety. He who pitied them when they were dead in trespasses and sins, and brought them to know and love Himself, will never leave nor forsake them. The grace which first blessed them will continue to bless them unto the end. To render their salvation certain is the immediate purpose of the Mediator's government.

"The gifts and calling of God are without repentance" (Rom. 11:29). Of this the Covenant itself supplies an express assurance, not only by its general statements, from which an inference to this effect might be fairly drawn, but in distinct terms. In one remarkable passage we find it thus stated: "They shall be My people, and I will be their God. And I will give them one heart, and one way, that they may fear Me forever, for the good of them and of their children after them. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put My fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from Me" (Jer. 32:38-40). The Covenant does not pro-



vide a pardon for sinners, and then leave them in their sins. It is no licenser of ungodliness, or shelterer of the libertine. There is nothing in it which to the least degree encourages those embraced by it to sin that grace may abound.

The "fear" which God puts into the hearts of renewed souls is the Divine antidote against indwelling sin, for, as Proverbs 8:13 tells us, "the fear of the LORD is to hate evil," and as we again read, "by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (Prov. 16:6). Therefore, until the sinner has by grace been brought to hate evil and depart from it, he is a stranger to the covenants of promise. Mark well, dear reader, God does not promise to place His doctrine in our heads—many have that, and nothing more—but His *fear* in our *hearts*. A merely intellectual knowledge of doctrine puffs up with pride and presumption; but His fear in the heart humbles and produces a godly walk. "I will not turn away from them to do them good." True, says the Arminian, but *they* may turn from *Him* to do evil. Not wholly, constantly, and finally so, as we are here positively assured: "I will put My fear in their hearts that *they shall not depart* from Me."

Thus far we have dwelt exclusively on the Divine side of this aspect of our subject: the measures God has taken and the means He has appointed for fulfilling His purpose of grace in the Covenant; now we must turn to the human side, and consider what God requires from us before the blessings of the Covenant can be bestowed upon us. Alas that in the few pulpits where the Divine side is clearly enunciated, most of them are silent on the human, or vehemently assert there is *no* human side to it. It is another example of the woeful lack of balance which now obtains so widely in Christendom. Those to whom we are alluding are very, very fond of quoting, "He *hath* made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure" (2 Sam. 23:5), but one never, never hears them cite, still less expound, "Incline your ear, and come unto Me; hear, and your soul shall live: *and I will make* an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David" (Isa. 55:3).

In the passage last quoted we learn just who are the characters with whom God proposes to make this covenant, and the terms with which they must comply if He is to do so. First, it is with those who had, hitherto closed their ears against Him, refusing to heed His requirements, and stealing themselves against His warnings and admonitions. To "incline your ear" signifies cease your rebellious attitude, submit yourselves to My righteous demands. Second, it is with those who are separated and alienated, at a guilty distance from Him. "Come unto Me" means throw down the weapons of your warfare, and cast yourselves on My mercy. Third, it is with those who are destitute of spiritual life, as the "hear and your souls shall live" clearly enough denotes. It is human *responsibility* which is here being enforced. Comply with these terms, says God, and I will make this covenant with you.

This enforcing of our responsibility is most meet for the honour of God, and as the honour of His Father lies nearer to the heart of Christ than anything else, He will not dispense the blessings of His grace except in that way which is most becoming to God's perfections. There is a perfect consonance between the impetration of God's favour and the application of it. As the justice of God deemed it meet that His wrath should be appeased and His law vindicated by the satisfaction made by His Son, so His wisdom determined that the sinner must be converted before pardon is bestowed upon him (Acts 3:19). We must be on our guard here, as everywhere, against extolling one of God's perfections

above another. True, the Covenant is entirely of grace—pure, free, sovereign grace—nevertheless, here, too, grace reigns through righteousness, and not at the expense of it.

God will not disgrace His grace by entering into covenant with those who are impenitent and openly defy Him. It is not that the sinner must do something to earn the grand blessings of the covenant. No, no, *he* contributes not a mite toward the procuring of them. That price, and infinitely costly it was, was fully paid by Christ Himself. But though God requires naught from us in the way of purchasing or *meriting* these blessings, He does in the matter of our actual *receiving* of them. “The honour of God would fall to the ground if we should be pardoned without submission, without confession of past sin, or resolution of future obedience; for till then we neither know our true misery, nor are we willing to come out of it; for they that securely continue in their sins, they despise both the curse of the Law and the grace of the Gospel” (Thomas Manton).—A.W.P.

## 2 CORINTHIANS 3.

We have long desired to offer a detailed exposition of this section of the Scriptures, but though the time for this be not fully ripe, we feel that some comments upon its contents are called for in connection with the closing articles of our series on the Divine Covenants. This is one of the principal chapters dealing with the new testament or Messianic Covenant, and therefore our treatment thereof would lack completeness were we to entirely ignore it. The main reason why we have for years past wished to open up this passage was because the "Dispensationalists" have so grievously wrested it. But their perversion of it is not to be wondered at, for there is not another portion in all God's Word which more clearly and expressly refutes their pet theory that this present age is to be followed by another which will witness the restoration and glorification of Judaism.

The outstanding error of the Dispensationalists is that the Gentiles in general and Christians in particular are not in any sense under the Ten Commandments, that the Divine Decalogue is not binding upon them as their rule of life, that the moral Law was abolished at the Cross. In order to bolster up their error they have appealed to the terms of 2 Corinthians 3, insisting that such clauses as, "that which is done away" (v. 11), and "that which is abolished" (v. 13), have reference to that which was written by the finger of the Lord God upon the two tables of stone. Before turning to the positive purport of our chapter, let us point out that such expressions as those just quoted cannot possibly be understood absolutely (without qualification) of the moral Law, as is clear from the following considerations.

First, because if the moral Law has been abolished, nothing remains to convict us of our guilt: "by the Law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20). Second, because if the moral Law be abolished the conduct of the Christless would be unreprieveable: "where no law is, there is no transgression" (Rom. 4:15). Third, because if it be abolished it were needless to inquire, "Do we then make void the Law through faith?" (Rom. 3:31)—the inspired answer to which is "God forbid." Fourth, because Christians could not then "delight in the Law of God" nor "serve" it (Rom. 7:22, 25). Fifth, because if the Law were abolished at Calvary, Paul could never have affirmed in his day there were those, "that are under the Law" (1 Cor. 9:20). Sixth, nor would he have quoted the Law and pressed it on Christians (Gal. 5:13-15). Seventh, nor assured obedient children that its promise of long life on earth held good for them (Eph. 6:1-3).

In order to understand 2 Corinthians 3, it is necessary to have before us something of the circumstances which occasioned the writing of the Corinthian Epistles, for a grasp of these is essential to an insight of many of their details. Soon after Paul's departure from Corinth (Acts 18) false teachers assailed the Corinthian saints, seeking to undermine the Apostle's influence and discredit his ministry. The result was that the believers there became divided into opposing factions, engaged in disputes, and seduced into carnal walking (1 Cor. 1:11, 12)—those who said, "I am of Paul and I am of Apollos," were probably the *Gentile* converts, whereas they who boasted, "I am of Cephas and I am of Christ," (claiming a fleshly relation to Him which they denied to the Gentile converts) were most likely converted Jews. These false teachers had come to Corinth with "letters of commendation" (2 Cor. 3:1), probably from the temple at Jerusalem. They were "Hebrews" (2 Cor. 11:22), professing to be "ministers of Christ" (2 Cor. 11:23), and yet they were "false apostles" (11:13). They had denied that Paul was a true Apostle of Christ, arguing (seemingly on the basis of Acts 1:21, 22) that he could not be such, seeing he had not ac-

accompanied with Christ during the days of His flesh. This had obliged Paul to write the Corinthians, vindicating the Divine authority of His Apostleship (1 Cor. 9:1-3).

His first Epistle to the Corinthians had produced a salutary effect upon them as is clear from 2 Corinthians 1 and 2, yet it did not silence the “false Apostles” (the Judaizing teachers), nor completely establish the believers there; hence the need for his second Epistle to them. His enemies were still working there against him, even charging him with not being a man of his word (see 1 Cor. 16:5 and compare 2 Cor. 1:15-24)! 2 Corinthians 5:12 shows plainly that Paul was furnishing his friends with materials for closing the mouths of those who maligned him—cf. also 2 Corinthians 10:2, 7. In 2 Corinthians 11 and 12, Paul, with great reluctance, fully vindicated himself and his ministry by comparing and contrasting his gifts, labours, sufferings, and conduct with the pretenses of the false teachers, and shows himself to be not one whit behind any of the Apostles.

How serious the whole situation was is clear from 2 Corinthians 13:3: the saints there had been made to doubt whether Paul was an Apostle of *Christ's* at all! In consequence of such leaven working among them, the Corinthians had become carnal in their walk, for corrupt doctrine always produces corrupt practice. That the “false apostles” were Judaizers (i.e., seeking to convert the Corinthians to Judaism—the whole Mosaic system) is apparent from many incidental details. We trust that these few remarks, though of a somewhat technical nature, will supply that key which will enable the closer student to enter more intelligently into the contents of the two Corinthian Epistles.

Bearing in mind what has been pointed out above, let us turn now to 2 Corinthians 3. The first three verses contain a part of the Apostle's vindication. “Do we begin again to commend ourselves? or need we, as some, epistles of commendation to you, or of commendation from you?” (v. 1). The word “again” intimates that a charge of glorifying himself had been made against Paul by his critics, so, in view of what he had just said in the context, he pauses to refute such a false accusation. Though the closing verses of chapter 2 contained a strong affirmation of his integrity, Paul wished it to be known that they had not been written with any intention of self-commendation: there was no need for him to “blow his own horn,” or to solicit the praise of dying men.

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (v. 2). So far was Paul from standing in need of any formal credentials in order to now secure the confidence of the Corinthian believers—their own conversion under his ministry fully authenticated his authority, mission, and fidelity. Why, the Church at Corinth was itself his “letter of commendation,” written not by man, but by the Spirit of God, thereby demonstrating that he was commissioned from Heaven. They were inscribed upon his deepest affections: a fact of which he was conscious and certain—anything of which a man is sure, may be said to be “written” upon his heart (Rom. 2:15; Heb. 8:10).

“Forasmuch as ye are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart” (v. 3). Not only were they inscribed upon his affections, but the miracle of grace wrought in them was obvious to others: “manifestly declared to be,” signifies publicly known as such. Their conversion had been so radical and conspicuous that thanks had been rendered to God for the same by His people far and wide, for their case was not one of a superficial and external reformation, but of a supernatural and internal regeneration. Thus, the saving efficacy of his preaching in that notorious centre of wickedness was the most convincing of all testimonials that he was a servant of Christ

and faithful minister of His Gospel. The conversion of the Corinthians was the work of Christ, effected by the instrumentality of Paul. How vastly superior was *this* to any human “letter of commendation”: any man could write with ink on an external tablet, but only Christ can write with the Spirit on the heart—through His servants.

“And such trust have we through Christ to Godward” (v. 4). The opening “And” at once intimates to what this “trust” referred: the fact that the Holy Spirit had so signally owned and blessed his labours at Corinth assured Paul’s heart through Christ that he was engaged in His cause and the kingdom of God, and therefore has he expressed himself so freely in 2:12-17. He was fully assured of the Divine authority and glory of his mission. It was a confidence so strong that it did not falter in the conscious presence of God. This confidence he had “through Christ”: it was not a carnal self-confidence of personal excellency, but a conviction of the veracity of the Gospel and of the reality of that vocation he had personally received from the ascended Redeemer.

“Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God” (v. 5). Admire here the blessed balance: strong confidence was coupled with deep humility! Paul would have them know that neither he nor his fellow-ministers possessed any sufficiency in themselves for so momentous a commission, either in natural endowment or because of their zeal and fidelity. He freely and frankly renders honour to Him: the Apostles were deeply conscious that all their success was entirely of God: He was the One who had called, qualified, and used them. How strongly this sense of insufficiency is expressed: not merely unable of themselves to *do* anything, but even to “think”—their knowledge, planning, and efficiency was neither self-acquired, nor self-sustained.

“Who hath also made us able ministers of the new testament” (v. 6). This was affirmed in confirmation of what he had previously stated, for the Greek word here rendered “able” is the same as translated “sufficient” in the verse preceding. It was God through Christ who had qualified the Apostles for their work. In referring to them as “ministers of the new testament,” he distinguishes the servants of Christ in this dispensation from those under the old economy. Herein he struck the keynote of all that follows—wherein the Christian is contrasted from the Mosaic dispensation. This “new testament” or “covenant”—as opposed to the covenant which God entered into with the nation of Israel at Sinai—is that “better testament” of which Jesus was made “Surety” (Heb. 7:22), the “better covenant” of which He is the Mediator (Heb. 8:6).

“Not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). The transition from Paul’s vindication of his Apostleship to his exposition of the superiority of Christianity over Judaism was both easy and natural: the terms which he had used in verse 3 at once brought to his mind the outstanding characteristics of the two covenants or economies, where he had set the internal work of the Spirit over against “tables of stone.” The terms of that old covenant which was inaugurated at Sinai were engraved upon the two tablets which Moses received from God, whereas His promise through Jeremiah (31:31-34), was that the requirements of the new covenant should be written upon the *hearts* of its beneficiaries. This it is which supplies the key to all that follows. It is not (as some have erroneously supposed) that the Apostle here pits Grace against Law, but rather that he contrasts the two covenants: the moral Law in the one case being engraved externally, and in the other being made effectual internally.

“Who also hath made us able ministers of the new testament: not of the letter, but of the spirit; for the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life” (2 Cor. 3:6). In the second half of this verse the Apostle begins a series of contrasts between the two covenants. We will not take anything for granted, but pause to give proof as we proceed. That the terms “letter” and “spirit” signify Judaism and Christianity is clear, first from the fact that *these* are what he continues to compare in the verses that follow; and second, because they are the terms he uses elsewhere in the same sense. Thus in Romans 7:6 he speaks of “newness of spirit” and “the oldness of the letter” when contrasting the two economies; so too in Romans 2:27 he characterises the Jew as being of “the letter.” Should it be inquired what is the ground of these designations, *why* is Judaism called “letter,” and Christianity “spirit,” two answers may be given.

First, Judaism may be called the “letter” for the same reason that God’s Word is called the “Scripture” (both words come from the same root), namely, because it was something *written*. Not only were the Ten Commandments—the *foundation* of the Mosaic economy—written on stones, but the whole Mosaic economy—moral, ceremonial and civil—was a volume known as “the writings.” Second, the Law as written was something *external* and objective. It was addressed to the eye and ear. It was not an inward principle or power. Judaism presented to the Jews the Divine rule of duty to which they must be conformed, but it conveyed neither disposition nor ability to obey. In antithesis thereto Christianity has to do with the heart and is spiritual rather than ritualistic. The Gospel “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16), for by it the Spirit works in regenerating the soul. Thus, 2 Corinthians 3:6 expresses briefly the characteristic differences between Judaism and Christianity. “The one was external, the other spiritual; the one was an outward precept, the other an inward power. In the one case the Law was written on stone, in the other on the heart. The one therefore was letter, the other spirit” (Charles Hodge).

“For if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stone, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance—which glory was to be done away; how shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?” (vv. 7, 8). Paul proceeds to set forth the immeasurable superiority of the new covenant over the old. In order to ascertain the precise trend of the Apostle in this passage it is most important to note his repeated reference to Moses, for it is thereby apparent that he is not opposing the Gospel to the moral Law as such (which long antedated Moses!), but to the whole Mosaic system, namely, *Judaism*. His later words, “when Moses is *read* the veil is upon their hearts” (v. 15), cannot possibly be restricted to the Ten Commandments, but obviously refers, mainly, to the ceremonial law, wherein there was so much which typified and pointed forward to Christ and His work of redemption.

The moral Law, whether as revealed in the Scriptures, or as the basis of the Mosaic Covenant, was designed to bring men to the knowledge of their sinfulness and helplessness, to produce a sense of guilt and wretchedness, and a longing for salvation. Yet though the ministration of the Ten Commandments was one of condemnation and death to every transgressor who lay under its curse, nevertheless, as setting forth the holiness, truth, and righteousness of God, it was “glorious.” It bore the stamp of Divinity upon it, and this was emblematically manifested in the face of Moses when he came down from the mount. The brightness of his face (Exo. 34:29) was in two respects a symbol of the glory of the old covenant. First, it was only an *external* one: what was even the bright

cloud overshadowing the cherubim to the light of God's presence filling the soul! Second, it was *transient*, soon "done away"; whereas the ministry of the new covenant issues in eternal glory.

"How shall not the ministration of the spirit be rather glorious?" (2 Cor. 3:8). Not only was Judaism "glorious" because the moral Law (its foundation) expressed the moral perfections of God, but also because the ceremonial law contained much that adumbrated the Person and work of Christ; and, too, because the whole Mosaic economy was introductory and preparatory to Christianity. Nevertheless, the Messianic Covenant contains a far higher and grander "glory." The A.V. rightly used a small "s" for "spirit" here in verse 8, for the reference is not to the third Person of the Godhead but to the new testament or covenant, which in verse 6 he had denominated "spirit" in contrast from "the letter" or old covenant. Observe, it is *not*, "the operations of the Spirit," but "the ministration of the spirit," which can only refer to the evangelical service of the Apostles and those who have succeeded them—the "teaching-function of the Gospel" as one has defined it. The Gospel is not something external and powerless, but is inward and saving, and so is designated "spirit."

"For if the ministration of condemnation be glory, much more doth the ministration of righteousness exceed in glory" (v. 9). "This verse is a confirmation of the preceding. The Gospel is more glorious than the Law, for the ministration of righteousness is more glorious than the ministration of condemnation. The 'ministration of condemnation' is that ministration which brings men into a state of conscious condemnation, that is, which makes them know and feel that they are condemned. The 'ministration of righteousness' is that ministration which reveals a righteousness by which men are justified, and thus freed from the condemnation pronounced upon them by the Law. As much better therefore as justification is than condemnation to eternal death, so much better is the Gospel than the Law" (Charles Hodge).

"For even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" (v. 10). "If that ministry, which in itself tended only to condemnation, contained such a display of the Divine glory as rendered the exercise of it honourable; how should not that ministry, by which sinners are taught the way of righteousness by faith in Christ, and which contained so full and complete a discovery of the glory and harmony of God's perfections, confer far greater honour on the Apostles, who were employed to preach it to the world? Indeed, the glory of the Law, and that of the Legal Dispensation, were so eclipsed by the excellent glory of the Gospel, as *in this respect* to be comparatively nothing; and after the publication of Christianity, the Mosaic dispensation had lost all its *reflected* glory and Divine authority and was become a lifeless letter and form to those who rejected Christ" (Thomas Scott).

"For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious" (v. 11). In seeking to discover exactly what has been "done away" the whole context must be taken into consideration. The Apostle was rebutting those who rejected the Gospel of God's grace and opposed Judaism to Christ. Now the central thing in Judaism, that about which the entire system revolved, was the *ceremonial law*. Most blessedly and strikingly did that shadow forth the Gospel, presaging Christ and His redemption; yet, if emptied of its typical meaning and message, it was but a lifeless form, a shell without any kernel, for the only saving value the ceremonial law possessed was to teach Israel to look beyond the shadows to the Substance. Consequently, after the Anti-type had appeared

and Christianity was established, it was discarded, “done away” by God, and was only a killing letter unto those who rejected Christ, determining to cling to it.

“For if that which is done away was glorious, much more that which remaineth is glorious.” In this verse the Apostle continues to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old, the glory of Christianity surpassing that of Judaism. First, he had pointed out that the one was “the ministration of death” (cf. Heb. 12:18-21), whereas the other was “the ministration of the spirit,” saving (2 Cor. 3:7, 8). Second, the former was “the ministration of condemnation,” but the latter of “righteousness” (v. 9). Here (v. 11) he contrasts their stability or continuance: the one was “done away,” the other “remaineth” to the end of time. The introduction of Christianity necessarily implied the abolition of Judaism: “In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away” (Heb. 8:13).

“Seeing then that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech; and not as Moses, which put a veil over his face, that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished” (2 Cor. 3:12, 13). We have linked together these two verses because the latter can only be properly understood in the light of the former, as the opening “And” of verse 12 indicates. In them yet another contrast is drawn, showing how the new covenant excels the old. The “such hope” of verse 12 is the reiteration of the Apostle’s “trust” or confidence in verse 4, here extending to the future as well as the present: he was fully assured that the Gospel and its ministry would prove themselves to be far more excellent than the ministry of Moses. “Plainness of speech” refers not so much to frankness of language, as to the absence of “dark sayings.”

“And not as Moses, which put a veil over his face.” This has reference to the *mode of manifestation* in connection with the revelation God made under the old covenant. In comparison with the clear and full manifestation of Divine grace in the Gospel, the redemptive mercy of God was obscured under Judaism by types and shadows, mysterious rites and elaborate symbols. The grand truth concerning the Person and work of Christ “In other ages was not made known unto the sons of men as it is now revealed” (Eph. 3:5). The truth was then hidden beneath the Levitical figures. Judaism had a Divine glory as was evident by the radiance of the mediator’s face; but it was obscure, as was denoted by the veil he placed on his countenance, so that Israel could not, “steadfastly look to the end of that which is abolished.”

The veil with which Moses covered his face was not only an apt emblem of the obscurity of that system of which he was the mediator, but it also served to prevent Israel seeing the end or fading away of the brightness of his countenance, for the glory of his face—in keeping with the transitory character of the Mosaic—was but a fleeting one. In 2 Corinthians 3:7, the “done away” had reference to the glory of the face of Moses, and in verse 11, to this ministry and the economy to which it belonged. Here in verse 13 the reference is again to the former, and “the end” signifies the termination. “Viewing this brightness as a symbol of the Divine mission of Moses, the Apostle ascribes to him a still further intention in the veiling of it (additional to the calming of their fears: Exo. 34:36), namely that the children of Israel might not, by the perception of its transience, be led to think of the transitory nature of the service or ministration of Moses itself” (P. Fairbairn). For Israel to have fixed their eyes on the future glory of Christianity would have tended to weaken their regard for the preparatory system under which they were placed.



“But their minds were blinded: for until this day remaineth the same untaken away in the reading of the Old Testament; which veil is done away in Christ” (v. 14). Blinded by pride and prejudice, they looked no further than the outward symbols, and mistaking the shadows for the substance, rejected Christ when He appeared, thereby preventing themselves from perceiving the real intent, meaning, and glory, of the Levitical law. “The veil untaken away in reading of the Old Testament” signifies they were so satisfied with the external, they could not penetrate to what lay beneath. The Jews utterly failed to understand the ministry of Moses, and though the Apostles used such plainness of speech, their hearts were calloused. The words, “which veil is done away in Christ,” fixes for us the spiritual meaning of the Old Testament types, promises and prophecies. For lack of faith in Christ, the Jews to this day are blind to the real purport of Judaism, and grasping tightly the types, despise the Antitype. The Old Testament is intelligible only when Christ is used as the key thereto.

“But even unto this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart” (v. 15). This is explanatory of the preceding verse: the reason why the unbelieving Jews failed to see that the Sinaitic Covenant had been “done away” in Christ, was because of the state of their hearts—had they not been blinded by prejudice and pride, when the Redeemer appeared and His glorious Gospel was proclaimed by His servants, they would have seen that the Substance now replaced the shadows. The revelation of Christ even in the Old Testament, though obscure when compared with the plain Epistles of the New Testament, was sufficiently plain to be understood by the Jew had he only been in a right state of mind; hence our Lord’s upbraiding of His disciples in Luke 24:25.

“Nevertheless, when it shall turn to the Lord, the veil shall be taken away” (2 Cor. 3:16). Salvation for the Jew comes in precisely the same way as it does to the Gentile, namely, by faith in and surrender to the Lordship of Christ. When the heart of that people, whether individually or collectively, is truly converted, then shall be given a true insight into the meaning of Judaism and the spiritual import of its ceremonies and sacrifices. “Now the Lord is that spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty” (v. 17). The word “spirit” should be with a small “s” as in verse 8, for the reference is obviously to “the spirit” of verse 6, the “spirit” that stands opposed to “the letter,” namely, the animating principle, the truth and power under the forms and types of Judaism. “Christ is the life of the Law” (Calvin)—savingly so when the heart truly turns to Him. Apart from faith in and grace from Christ, all knowledge, ordinances, and external obedience is but a dead form of godliness.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (v. 18). The opening “But” introduces that company of believers opposed to the blinded Jews who knew not the Lord. The “we all (Christians) with unveiled face beholding” is first in designed contrast from those who have a veil upon their hearts (v. 15). Second, it looks back to the eminent case of Moses, who, unlike the people, was admitted into the immediate presence of the Lord (being unveiled before Him, though veiled before them), whence he received impressions of glory upon his countenance. So Christians, though in a far higher sense, behold and reflect the glory of the Lord, and not only so, are transformed after His image. How this, again, demonstrates the vast superiority of Christianity over Judaism.

Now to sum up 2 Corinthians 3. Paul is vindicating the Divine authority and excellency of his Apostleship, in the course of which he magnifies his office by showing how much grander was the mission entrusted to him than had been the ministry of Moses. In developing his demonstration, the Apostle places Christianity in sharp antithesis from Judaism, the latter especially as it revolved around the ceremonial law. The contrast is between the two “testaments” or “covenants,” the Mosaic and the Messianic economies (compare Heb. 12:18-24), which he opposes as “letter” and “spirit” (v. 6), and in what follows to the end of the chapter a series of contrasts are drawn showing wherein the latter excelled the former.

The Judaisers were insisting that the ministration of the Mosaic economy still obtained (the temple yet stood at Jerusalem), and therefore they, consistently, taught that when Gentiles believed in Christ they must be circumcised and brought into subjection to the whole ceremonial law if they were to become recipients of the peculiar blessings promised the Jews. The Apostle here demolished their very foundation by affirming that the old covenant was “abolished.” His argument from verse 8 onwards shows that if Christ be

taken out of the old covenant—that is, if the ceremonial law were regarded as law and not as a type of Him—then it was but a dead body—lifeless and powerless. Considered abstractedly (a thing apart as it were in itself), the old covenant was but a ministration of condemnation and death. The Apostle was not dealing with the Law as a standard of conduct for believers, but as that which sounded the doom of unbelievers.

That which the Apostle here dwelt upon particularly was the fact that the Mosaic dispensation was a *veiled* or obscure one. Not only was the Siniatic Covenant a covering cast upon the Covenant of Promise made with Abraham (Gal. 3:16-19), but it largely concealed the glories of Christ. Hence it was that Moses veiled his face, denoting that the blessings of redemption were hidden beneath elaborate symbols, and also adumbrating the fact that the hearts of unbelieving Israel were calloused when they read his writings. It is to be duly noted that throughout this chapter Paul studiously avoided using the words “grace” and “law” (for it is *not* a contrast between *them*), but he *does* employ the terms “new testament” (v. 6) and “old testament” (v. 14)! That which is “done away” is not the Ten Commandments as the Rule of life for all God’s people, but the Mosaic economy; and since Judaism is “*abolished*” it will never be resuscitated in some future “millennium.”—A.W.P.

## THE DOCTRINE OF ELECTION.

### 7. *Its Design.*

Last month we sought to go right back to the very beginning of all things and trace out the *order* of God's counsels in connection with His eternal decree in Election, so far as they are revealed in Holy Writ. In the two parts of this article we shall seek to project our thoughts forward to the future, and contemplate God's grand design, or *what it was* He ordained His people *unto*. Here we shall be on more familiar ground to many of our readers, yet we must not overlook the fact that even this phase of our subject will be entirely new to quite a few of those who will scan these lines, and for their sakes especially it will behoove us to proceed slowly, taking nothing for granted, but furnishing clear Scriptural proof for what we advance. That which is to be before us is inexpressibly blessed, O that it may please God to so quicken the hearts of both writer and reader that we may mutually rejoice and adore.

1. God's design in our Election was that we should *be holy*: "According as hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and without blame before Him" (Eph. 1:4). There has been much difference of opinion among the commentators as to whether this refers to that imperfect holiness of grace which we have in this world, or to that perfect holiness of Glory which will be ours in the world to come. Personally, we believe that both are included, but that the latter is chiefly intended; and so we shall expound it. First, of that perfect holiness in Heaven. That this is the prime reference appears from the amplifying clause, "and without blame before Him": it is *such* a holiness that God Himself can find no flaw in. Now the imperfect holiness which the saints have personally in this life, though it be a holiness before God in truth and sincerity, yet it is not one, "without blame"—it is not one God can fully delight in.

Second, as God has ordained us to perfect holiness in the world to come, so He has ordained us to an evangelical holiness in this world, or else we shall never come to Heaven. Unless we be made pure in heart here, we shall never see God there. Holiness is the image of God upon the soul, a likeness to Him which makes us capable of communion with Him; and therefore the Apostle declares that, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord" (Heb. 12:14). As reason is the foundation of learning, no man being able to attain it unless he has reason, so we cannot reach the glory of Heaven unless the principle of holiness be Divinely communicated to us. Therefore as God's first design in our election was that we should be holy before Him, let us now make this *our* paramount concern. Here, too, is solid comfort for those who find indwelling sin to be their heaviest burden: though your holiness be most imperfect in this life, yet is it the earnest of a perfect holiness in the life to come.

Holiness must needs be the fruit of our being chosen in Christ, for it is essential to our having a being in Him. It would be a contradiction in terms to say that God chose a man to be in Christ and did not make him to be holy. If God ordains a man to be in Christ, then He ordains him to be a *member* of Christ, and there must be conformity between Head and members. The election of grace was given to Christ as His Spouse, and husband and wife must be of the same kind and image. When Adam was to have a wife she must be the same specie: none of the beasts was fit to be a partner for him. God brought them all before him, but among them all, "For Adam was not found a help *meet* for him" (Gen. 2:20), because they had not the same image and kind. So if God choose a man in

Christ—the Holy One—he must necessarily be holy, and this is the reason why our holiness is annexed to our being chosen in Him (Eph. 1:4).

God, then, has decreed that His people shall be perfectly holy before Him, that they shall be in His presence forever, there to enjoy Him everlastingly, and delight themselves in that enjoyment, for as the Psalmist tells us, “in Thy presence is fullness of joy.” Therein is revealed to us *of what consists* the ineffable bliss of our eternal inheritance: it is perfect holiness, perfect love to God—this is the essence of celestial glory. It all the Apostles had spent the whole of their remaining lifetime in an attempt to depict and describe what Heaven is, they could have done no more than enlarge upon these words: perfect holiness in God’s presence, perfect love to Him, perfect enjoyment of Him, even as we are beloved by Him. This is Heaven, and this is what God has decreed to bring His people unto. This is His first design in our election: to bring us into an unblemished holiness before Him.

2. God’s design in our Election was that we should be *His sons*: “Having foreordained us unto adoption as sons through Jesus Christ unto Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will” (Eph. 1:5 R. V.). Holiness is that which *fits* us for Heaven, for an unholy person could not possibly enjoy Heaven; were he to enter it, he would be altogether out of his native element. Holiness, then, is that which constitutes the saints meetness for their inheritance in light (Col. 1:12). But adoption is that which gives *the right* to the glory of Heaven, being bestowed upon them as a dignity or prerogative (John 1:12). As we have pointed out on other occasions, the last two words of Ephesians 1:4 belong properly to verse 5: “In love having predestinated us unto the adoption.” God’s love unto His dear Son was so great that, having chosen us in Him, His heart went out toward us as one with Christ, and therefore did He ordain us unto this further honour and privilege. This agrees perfectly with, “Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God” (1 John 3:1).

God might have made us perfectly holy in Christ and added no further to it. “Ye have your fruit unto holiness” says the Apostle (Rom. 6:22), and precious fruit that is; but he did not stop there—“and the end everlasting life”: that is added as a further fruit and privilege. In like manner, God added adoption to holiness: as the Psalmist says, “the Lord will give us grace and glory” (84:11). As our *God*, He chose us to holiness, according to that express saying, “ye shall be holy for I the Lord your God am holy” (Lev. 19:2). But as He became our *Father* in Christ, He predestinated us unto the adoption of *sons*. Here, then, is the twofold relation which the Most High sustains to His people in and through Christ, and there is the consequent twofold blessing of our persons because of Christ. Observe how minutely this corresponds with, “Blessed be the God *and Father* of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3)!

By adoption we become God’s sons *in law*, as by regeneration we are made His children *in nature*. By the new birth we become (experimentally) members of God’s family; by adoption we have the legal status of sons, with all the high privileges that relationship involves: “Because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts” (Gal. 4:6). Adoption makes known the high prerogatives and blessings which are ours by virtue of union with Christ, the legal right which we have unto all the blessings we enjoy, both here and hereafter. As the Apostle reminds us, if we are children, then we are “heirs,” co-heirs with Christ; yea, heirs of God (Rom. 8:17)—to possess and enjoy

God as Christ does. “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s *son-in-law*?” exclaimed David (1 Sam. 18:23), when it was suggested that he marry Michal: you may haply be the king’s favourite and he may make you great, but to become his son-in-law is the highest honour of all. This is why we are told immediately after 1 John 3:1, “Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that when He shall appear, we shall be like Him” (v. 2)—like Him in our proportion: as He perfectly enjoys God, so shall we.

Let it be duly noted that it is “through Jesus Christ” we are sons and heirs of God. Christ is our Pattern in election, the One to whose image we are predestinated to be conformed. Christ is God’s natural Son, and we become (by union with Christ) God’s legal sons. “That He might be the Firstborn of many brethren” (Rom. 8:29), signifies that God did set up Christ as the prototype and masterpiece, and made us to be so many little copies and models of Him. Every dignity we possess, every blessing we enjoy—save our election when God chose us in Him—we owe to Christ. He is the virtual cause of our adoption. Christ, as we have said, is God’s natural Son; how, then, do we become His sons? Thus: God gave us to Christ to be married to Him, and He betrothed us to Him from everlasting, and so we become sons-in-law unto God, even as a woman comes to be a man’s daughter-in-law by marrying his son.

We owe our adoption to our relation unto Christ’s Person, and not to His atoning work. Our adoption as originally it was in predestination bestowed upon us, was not founded upon redemption or Christ’s obedience, but on Christ’s being God’s natural Son. Our justification is indeed grounded upon Christ’s obedience and sufferings: “In whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins” (Eph. 1:7). But our adoption and becoming sons-in-law to God is through Christ’s being His natural Son, and we His brethren in relation to *His Person*. “God is faithful by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). That fellowship or communion involves our participation of His dignities and whatever else in Him we were capable of; just as a woman acquires a legal title unto all the possessions of the man she marries. As Christ being God’s natural Son was the foundation of His work possessing infinite worth, so our adoption is founded on our relation to His Person, and then our justification upon His meritorious work.

We must, however, add this word of caution to what has just been pointed out: when we fell in Adam we lost all our privileges, and therefore Christ was fain to purchase them anew; and hence it follows that adoption, and all other blessings, are the fruits of His merit so far as their actual *bestowment* is concerned. Thus the Apostle tells us Christ became incarnate, “to redeem them that were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Gal. 4:5)—our sins and bondage under the Law and its curse interposing an obstacle against God’s actual bestowment of adoption. But mark the minute accuracy of the language used: Christ’s redemption is not said to *procure* adoption for us, but only that we might *receive* it. That which procured adoption was our relation to Christ as God’s sons-in-law: this being God’s purpose from everlasting.

Let us duly consider now the *greatness* of this privilege. Adam was created holy, and Luke 3:38 tells us he was “the son of God,” but nowhere is it said that he was the son of God by adoption through Christ. So too in Job 38:7 the angels are called “morning stars” and “sons of God,” yet we are never told they are such by adoption through Christ. They were “sons” indeed by creation, for God made them; but not sons-in-law of God by being

married unto His Son, which is a grace and dignity peculiar to *believers*. Thus we excel the angels by our special relation to the Son of God's love: Christ nowhere calls the angels His "brethren," as He does us! This is borne out by Hebrews 12:23 where, in contrast from the angels mentioned previously, we read of "the Church of the firstborn," a title denoting superiority (Gen. 49:3): we being related to God's "Firstborn" have a higher privilege of sonship than the angels have.

"A figure may perhaps help us here. A father chooses a bride for his son, as Abraham chose one of his own kin for Isaac, and gives her a goodly dowry, besides presenting her with bridal ornaments, such as Eliezer put upon Rebekah. But on becoming the spouse of his son, she becomes his daughter, and now his affections flow forth to her, not only as a suitable bride for his dear son—not only does he admire her beauty and grace, and is charmed with the sweetness of her disposition, but he is moved also with fatherly love towards her as adopted unto himself, and thus occupying a newer and nearer relationship. Figures are, of course, necessarily imperfect, and as such must not be pressed too far; but if the one which we have adduced at all helps us to a clearer understanding of the wondrous love of God in the adoption of us unto Himself, it will not be out of place. We thus see that predestination to the adoption of children, is a higher, richer, and greater blessing than being chosen unto holiness, and may thus be said to follow upon it an additional and special fruit of God's love.

"But the love of God, in predestinating the church unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, has even a deeper root than viewing her as the Bride of His dear Son. It springs out of and is most closely and intimately connected with the true, real, and eternal Sonship of Jesus. Being chosen in Christ, the elect become the sons of God. Why? Because He is the true, real, and essential Son of the Father; and thus, as in union with Him, who is the Son of God by nature, they become the sons of God by adoption. Were He a Son merely by office, or by incarnation, this would not be the case, for He would then only be a Son by adoption Himself. But being the Son of God by eternal subsistence, He can say, 'Behold I and the children which Thou hast given Me: I Thy Son by nature, they Thy sons by adoption.' We see, then, that so great, so special was the love of God to His only begotten Son, that, viewing the Church in union with Him, His heart embraced Her with the same love as that wherewith He loved Him" (J. C. Philpot).

3. God's design in our Election was that we should be *saved*: saved from the Fall and its effects; from sin and its attendant consequences. This particular ordination of God was upon His foreview of our defection in Adam, who was our natural head and representative; for as pointed out in previous articles, God decreed to permit the fall of His people in order to the greater manifestation of His own grace and the increased glory of the Mediator. Obviously the very term "salvation" implies sin, and that in turn presupposes the Fall. But this determination of God to suffer His people to fall into sin and then deliver them from it, was entirely subservient to His prime design concerning the elect and the ultimate glory to which He ordained them. The subordination of this third design of God in our election to those we have already considered appears in, "who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but *according to* His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2 Tim. 1:9).

If the above Scripture be carefully analyzed, it will be seen, first, that God formed a "purpose" concerning His people and that "grace" was given them in Christ Jesus "before the world began" either historically or in the mind of God: the reference being to His sov-

sovereign act in singling them out from the pure mass of creatures, giving them being in Christ, and bestowing upon them the grace of sonship. Second, that God “hath saved us” (the reference being to *believers*) and “called us with a holy calling,” which refers to what takes place in time when He brings us forth from our death in sin by an effectual call unto holiness—cf. Titus 3-5. Third, that this saving and calling of us was “not according to our works” either actual or foreseen, but “according to His own purpose,” i.e., was based upon His *original intention* that we should be His sons. Neither our merits (for we have none), nor our misery, moved God to save us, but His having given us to Christ from the beginning.

As we have previously pointed out, God assigned unto Christ a *double relation* to His people: “Christ is the Head of the Church, and He is the Saviour of the Body” (Eph. 5:23). In the same Epistle He is seen first as the Head in whom we were originally “blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ” (Eph. 1:3): later, He is presented as Saviour, as the One who “loved the Church and gave Himself for it, that He might sanctify and *cleanse* it” (5:25, 26). In speaking of Him as “the Saviour of the Body” it is intimated that He is the Saviour of none else, which is clearly confirmed by, “therefore I endure all things for the elect’s sake, that *they* may also obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Tim. 2:10): not merely, “salvation” indefinitely, but “*the* salvation” decreed by God for *His own*. Nor does, “we trust in the living God, who is the Saviour of all men, specially of those that believe” (1 Tim. 4:10) in any-wise clash with this: the “living God” has reference to the Father, and “Saviour” is more correctly rendered “Preserver” in Baxter’s Interlinear.

Now this “salvation” which God has decreed for His elect, viewed as fallen in Adam, may be summed up under two heads: from the guilt and penalty of sin, and from its dominion and power, these having to do, respectively, with the legal and experimental sides. They are accomplished in time by what Christ did *for* us, and by what the Spirit works *in* us. Of the former it is written, “For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:9)—of the latter we read, “God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth” (2 Thess. 2:13). It is by the latter we obtain evidence and assurance of the former: “Knowing, brethren, beloved, your election of God: for our Gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power and in the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:4, 5). When our salvation from sin is consummated, we shall be delivered from the very *presence* of it.

4. God’s design in our Election was that we should be *for Christ*: “All things were created by Him, and for Him” (Col. 1:16). God not only chose us in Christ and predestinated us unto sonship through Him, but gave us to Him, so that Christ was likewise the end of God’s purpose in choosing us to perfect holiness and adoption. God having a natural Son, the second Person in the Trinity, whom He designed to make visible in human nature, through an union of it to His Son, did decree for His greater glory to ordain us unto the adoption of sons to Him and as brethren unto Him, so that He should not be alone, but rather “the Firstborn among many brethren.” As in Zechariah 13:7 the Man Christ Jesus is designated Jehovah’s “Fellow,” so from Psalm 45:7 we learn that God predestinated others to be for his Son, to be His companions: “Hath anointed Thee above Thy *fellows*.” How this tends to the increased glory of Christ must be left for the second part of this article.—A. W. P.

## DIVINE PROVIDENCE

### *Saul at Gilgal.*

Saul at Gilgal and Samuel's delay in coming to him: "And he tarried seven days, according to the set time that Samuel had appointed: but Samuel came not to Gilgal, and the people were scattered from him" (1 Sam. 13:8). Why did not Samuel come within the appointed time? Was it accident, was it necessity, was it negligence, which was the cause of his delay? Whatever it was, it was providential. *God* designed it to be a touchstone to try the obedience of Saul. And it was a test peculiarly adopted to try the strength of the faith and obedience of the new king to the King and God of Israel. No arguments for disobeying a Divine injunction could be more plausible than those pleaded by Saul on the occasion. The people were scattered, and the piety of the king will not engage in battle without sacrifice to the God of Israel. As Samuel had disappointed him, does not *necessity* oblige him to offer a sacrifice himself?

For the sequel read 1 Samuel 13:8-14. When Providence puts it out of the power of His people to observe His ordinances according to His own appointment, they are *not* guilty in *not* observing them; and they *are* guilty when they observe them, under any pretence, contrary to the Divine appointment. [This principle applies most pertinently to the observing of the Lord's Supper in such a day as this: where it is impossible to do so *Scripturally*—as is now the case in many places—when the believer yearns to do so, God accepts the will for the deed: A.W.P.J. God could have given victory to Saul without sacrifice, when sacrifice could not be legally observed. And when Saul observed it *illegally*, God was not only displeased with him, but on that very account rejected him as king of Israel. And had Saul waited a little longer, he would have had sacrifice in a legal way. Samuel made his appearance as soon as Saul had ceased to offer the burnt-offering. The Providence of God tests His people, even with their conviction of the utility of His ordinances.—Alexander Carson.



### A VERY PRESENT HELP.

While it is ever our desire to prepare each article in accord with the title of this magazine, yet we would point out that we write not only for the informing and instructing of the mind, but also (and chiefly) for the affecting of the heart and the practical regulation of the walk. It therefore seems fitting that we should say a word, however brief, on the crisis through which the Lord has recently brought us as a nation and empire. In connection therewith three passages stand out in our thoughts.

First, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble" (Psa. 46:1). This holds good for a nation as truly as for an individual, and for the latter as much as the former. Most manifestly was the blessed truth of this verse evidenced a few weeks ago. While regretting that there has been little or no national acknowledgment of our grievous sins as a people, and no official call to repentance and humiliation before God, yet there is much for which we ought to be profoundly thankful. First, that a national call to earnest prayer for God's intervention was made, and very widely responded to. Second, that the message of our gracious sovereign, King George, was a *Scriptural* one: "Be of good cheer." Third, that the wildly enthusiastic crowds who greeted the Prime Minister on returning to his official residence, sang, "O God our help in ages past," before they dispersed. Fourth, that a call was officially made for national thanksgiving to be rendered unto God for peace.

Second, "The Heavens do rule" (Dan. 4:26). How comforting to faith is such a Divine declaration. How blessed to know that the living God is on the Throne, shaping the destiny of nations as truly as He orders the life of each individual saint. How tranquilizing for the mind to be assured that neither despot nor dictator can move one step further than what the Lord permits. Nevertheless, it is our duty and privilege to supplicate God when the peace of the world is seriously imperiled, that it may please Him to hold back the hounds of war and in His righteous wrath, "remember mercy." That the "Heavens do rule" was our unfailing confidence and consolation throughout the trying days from which we have recently emerged, and the substance of this paragraph was what we sent to numbers of our readers during the crisis itself. Once more the editor would bear his humble testimony that the grand truth of God's absolute supremacy and sovereignty supplies a sure resting-place for the heart in every trial.

Third, "Seek the Lord, and His strength: seek His face evermore" (Psa. 105:4). This is the verse which comes before us and which we desire shall impress our hearts now that the great emergency is behind us. It is natural for us, both as a people and individuals, to seek unto the Lord under the pressure of an unbearable strain, for even the animals cry out for relief when in distress. But more than this is required from us: far more than this is due Him who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises." "Seek His face *evermore*" is our crying need, as an empire, and as individual believers. To "seek His face" in times of prosperity as well as adversity, when peace is assured as much as when it is threatened. To "seek His face" for wisdom, for the spirit of righteousness, for strength to do that which is pleasing in His sight. To "seek His face" for a fresh outpouring of His Spirit, for the strengthening and enlarging of His Cause on earth, for the glorifying of His great name. Let us pray with renewed earnestness for such blessings.—A. W. P.