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STUDIES

IN THE

SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink (1886-1952)

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

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STUDIES IN THE SCRIPTURES

“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39

EDITOR: Arthur W. Pink

IDENTIFICATION OF THE GODLY

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Mat 11:30). Probably there is no passage in the New Testament more familiar to churchgoers than the one (Mat 11:28-30) of which our quotation is the final clause. Yet, there is scarcely any other that has been so sadly mangled by unqualified novices and unfaithful preachers. The invitation and promise with which it opens have been divorced from the conditions by which they are qualified, so that an entirely inadequate, in fact a false, apprehension of the same has been conveyed of what our Lord there taught. That which is required from those desiring rest of soul—namely, submission to the authority of Christ and the following of His example—is omitted. They emphasize His *gift*, but are silent upon *the terms* upon which He bestows it. Far better instructed thereon than so many of our modern evangelists was good old Matthew Henry (1662-1714). Outlining the whole passage, that helpful commentator pointed out:

“We are here invited to Christ as our Priest, Prince, and Prophet, to be saved, and, *in order to that*, to be ruled and taught by Him. First, we must come to Christ as our Rest and repose ourselves in Him. Second, we must come to Him as our Ruler, and submit ourselves in Him, ‘Take my yoke upon you.’ This must go along with the former, for Christ is exalted to be both a Prince and a Saviour (Act 5:31), ‘a priest upon his throne’ (Zec 6:13). The *rest* He promises is a release from the drudgery of sin, not from the service of God. Christ has a yoke for our necks, as well as a crown for our heads, and this yoke He expects [better, “requires”] we should take upon us and draw in. Third, we must come to Him as our Teacher, and set ourselves to learn of Him. We must learn of Him to be ‘meek and lowly,’ to mortify our pride and passion, which render us so unlike to Him. We must so learn of Christ as to learn Christ (Eph 4:20), for He is both Teacher and Lesson, Guide and Way.”

“My yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” This is not a poetic hyperbole, but the language of truth and soberness, and, therefore, is not to be denied or doubted. The Saviour was there drawing a blessed contrast with the scribes and Pharisees, of whom He said, “For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers” (Mat 23:4). In order to gratify a domineering spirit, they usurped authority, and, by their inventions and traditions, removed liberties which God allowed, and imposed irksome injunctions which He had never enjoined. They demanded a greater strictness in the observing of the ceremonial law than the Lord did, obtruding severe tasks (under pain of heavy penalties), but offering no assistance unto those who submitted to their dictates. They were the false shepherds who ruled “with force and with cruelty” (Eze 34:4). Such has ever characterized a carnal priesthood. Now, in sharp and blessed opposition thereto, the great High Priest of God’s people presents a yoke which is easy and a burden that is light, and places His everlasting arms beneath those who voluntarily take and wear the same.

Christ is no Egyptian taskmaster, requiring men to make bricks without straw, but “a merciful and faithful high priest” (Heb 2:17), One who can be “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (4:15). Therefore, it is not fetters and chains which He imposes upon His followers, but a yoke that is pleasant and a burden that is light. As others before us have pointed out, the Greek word rendered “easy” also signifies “good and gracious.” So far from Christ’s yoke being galling and painful, to the yielding neck it is benign and delightful. It is designed not for our injury, but for our benefit. The first reference in His “my yoke” and “my burden” is unto the one that Christ Himself wore and bore, and which He declared to be easy and light. And what did they consist of? Why, doing the Father’s will, being about His Father’s business. In that will He delighted (Psa 40:8), and to do that business was what had brought Him down from heaven to earth (Luk 2:49). Since His followers are predestinated to be conformed unto His image, He requires that they should wear the yoke which He sets before them. Christ gives rest not *in* sin and unlawful pleasures, but *from* them, by engaging the heart with something infinitely better. It is rest, not in our lusts, but in Himself.

First, the Lord says, “Take my yoke upon you” (Mat 11:29). To take His yoke upon us is to enlist under His banner, to make a public profession of His Gospel, to surrender to His lordship. To learn of Him is to take our place at His feet as little children to be instructed by Him. It is to submit ourselves wholly to His will, to obey His precepts, and to pattern our lives after His example. Those are the conditions which must be fulfilled by us if we are to obtain rest unto our souls. Then, second, He assures us “For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” That is the inducement to comply with His terms. By those words, each professing Christian reader should honestly and seriously examine himself. They afford a sure criterion by which we may test ourselves and ascertain whether or not we have really taken His yoke upon us. Each one may identify himself by his answers to these questions—Am I finding the yoke I am wearing easy or difficult? Is the burden I am carrying light or heavy?

As John Newton (1725-1807) declared, “This verse alone, if seriously attended to, might convince multitudes that, though they bear the name of Christians and are found among the Lord’s worshipping people, they are as yet entire strangers to the religion of the

Gospel. Can it be supposed that our Lord would give a false character of His yoke? If not, how can any dream that they are His followers while they account a life of communion with God and entire devotedness to His service to be dull and burdensome? Those, however, who have made the happy trial find it to be such a burden as wings are to a bird. Far from complaining of it, they are convinced that there is no real pleasure attainable in any other way." Christ's commandments are not, in themselves, "grievous" (1Jo 5:3), but are "holy, just, and good" (Rom 7:12). They are given in love, and are to be fulfilled by love. "In keeping of them there is great reward" (Psa 19:11). *For* the keeping of them, full assistance is obtainable from Him if we do but seek the same. It is the way of transgressors that is "hard" (Pro 13:15), but strong consolation is to be found in the way of duty, and in Christ's presence there is fullness of joy.

Wisdom's ways "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace" (Pro 3:17). It must be so, for every part is lighted from above, the whole path is strewn with precious promises, each step is heavenward. The only happiness worth seeking is to be found therein. Yes, it must be so, for there is comfort and contentment in walking with God. If, then, the way along which the reader is journeying be unpleasant, he is a stranger to Wisdom's ways and is a fool. Those ways are pleasant only to Wisdom's children. The yoke of Christ is irksome and distasteful to the unregenerate, for it makes directly against the motions of the carnal nature. The service of Christ is veritable drudgery to those who are in love with the world and who find their delight in gratifying the lusts of the flesh. To the self-willed and self-seeking, the commandments of the Lord cannot but be offensive, for they require the denying of self and the pursuit and cultivation of personal holiness. But to one whose heart has been captivated by Christ, to be under His yoke is delectable. If he comes to Him daily to be renewed in the inner man, yields himself afresh to His rule, sits at His feet to be taught of Him the loveliness of meekness and lowliness, enjoys communion with Him, then, His will is "good and acceptable" (Rom 12:2) to him.

"And my burden is light" (Mat 11:30). It is so to those who "learn of him" (Eph 4:20). No burden is heavy if it is shouldered *by love*. "Jacob served seven years for Rachel; and they seemed unto him but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen 29:20)! Is it a burden for a father to work and provide for his wife and children? Not if he has real affection for them. Is it a burden for a fond mother to sit through the night tending her little one when it is sick? So far from it, she refuses to entrust the task unto another. Where there be a genuine desire to please Christ, the wheels of duty run smoothly. Wisdom's children find their burden light because they have the assurance that their efforts are acceptable to Christ—not for any excellence in their performances, but because they have been done from a desire to glorify Him. What is heavy to flesh and blood is light to faith and grace, and because it has to be borne but for a moment (2Co 4:17). The burden is light just in proportion as we lay aside every weight (Heb 12:1), and because He gives strength to bear it.

None can adequately describe the radical contrast there is between the bondage and misery of the service of sin and the liberty and peace of practical holiness. But anyone, who has personally experienced both, need have no difficulty in determining whether he be out of Christ or yoked to Him. If you have a peace which passes understanding and a joy which the world knows nothing of, you are a godly person. If despite both inward and

outward opposition, you find obedience to Christ desirable and agreeable, then, His Spirit must indwell you, and the more you grow in grace, the easier His yoke and the lighter His burden.

EXPOSITION OF JOHN'S FIRST EPISTLE

40. *Amazing Grace (3:1)*

*“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us,
that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the
world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.”*

Having stated that “If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him” (2:29)—which means, in a word, that the performing of good works is one of the sure evidences of the new birth—the apostle’s mind was carried back to the *originating cause*, namely, the eternal love of the Father. The contemplation thereof moved him to break forth into adoring and joyous celebration of the same. But human language is entirely inadequate to express and describe the divine acts that produce our salvation, and great care needs to be taken lest we either carnalize¹ or unduly restrict the terms that are employed in connection therewith. We agree with John Calvin (1509-1564) that “when he says love has bestowed, he means that it is from mere bounty and benevolence that God makes us His children...Love, then, is declared here to be gratuitous. There is, indeed, an impropriety in the language, but the apostle preferred speaking thus rather than not to express that the more abundantly God’s goodness has been manifested toward us, the greater are our obligations to Him.” Thus by “love” here we understand the divine benignity or His amazing grace.

The chapter division at this point is apt to mislead, detaching in our minds that which is here said from what immediately precedes: 3:1 is closely connected with 2:29. The thought of sonship is carried forward, with the design of emphasizing the blessedness of such a high dignity and honour bestowed. That is first denoted by the call to “behold” it, and then by considering the “manner” of the same. So far from regarding 3:1 as the commencement of a new subject, the perspicuous Calvin considered that it furnished the second (implied) argument in proving that faith is necessarily connected with a holy and pure life. “The first argument is that we are spiritually begotten after the likeness of Christ; it hence follows that no one is born of Him except he who lives righteously. The second argument is from the dignity and excellence of our calling, for it was no common honour he says that the heavenly Father bestowed upon us when He adopted us as His children. This being so great a favour, the desire for purity ought to be kindled in us, so as to be conformed to His image. Nor, indeed, can it be otherwise, but that he who acknowledges himself to be one of

¹ **carnalize** – to limit to man’s experience; to derive from human reasoning.

God's children purifies himself. And to make this exhortation more forceful, he amplifies the favour of God."

The apostle was overwhelmed with astonishment as he contemplated the amazing grace that conferred such honour and felicity upon worms of the earth, as to call them into the relation of sons. Whether he viewed the ineffable greatness and elevation of the Father, the insignificance and degradation of the subjects, the uniqueness and inestimable value of the blessing bestowed, or the manner and marvel of its communication, he was "lost to wonder, love, and praise." That the Father should ever deign² to notice us at all is an act of infinite condescension on His part: that He should so highly distinguish us as to set His heart upon us, choose in Christ, redeem and regenerate lifelong rebels against Him, completely passes knowledge, and so far exceeds human comprehension as to defy expression by tongue or pen. Such a prodigy is without parallel, not only on earth but in heaven also; as Thomas Scott (1747-1821) rightly said, it is "incapable of being illustrated by any comparison"—any attempt to do so beclouds its uniqueness and is only a darkening of counsel by mere words. Rather let us earnestly seek grace to evince our gratitude thereat, and endeavour to walk worthy of such a calling by a humble and obedient walk.

Our text opens with a call to attention, for while the word "*behold*" here is a word of adoring wonderment, an exclamation of astonishment at such a display of grace, yet it is much more than a bare interjection. It is a verb summoning to action. Thomas Manton (1620-1677), with his customary thoroughness, showed that there is a threefold "*behold*" in Scripture, and that each of them is applicable in this place. *First*, the behold of demonstration, to denote the reality of the object, as in "*Behold your king*" (Joh 19:14)—there He is before your very eyes, said Pilate unto the Jews. When prefixed to a doctrinal statement, it avers the certainty of it, as in "*Lo [behold] this, we have searched it, so it is; hear it, and know thou it for thy good*" (Job 5:27). *Second*, there is the behold of admiration, which is designed to awaken our drowsy minds when something extraordinary is presented to our attention, challenging our most serious thoughts, as in "*Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow*" (Lam 1:12). *Third*, the behold of gratulation,³ rejoicing and delighting ourselves in the privilege, as in "*Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep*" (Psa 121:4)—take comfort therefrom.

Now each of those senses is to be included here, "*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*" Behold it with faith and confidence. Though so astonishing and mysterious, entertain not the least doubt about it, for it is certified by a "*Thus saith the Lord.*" Behold it with adoring gratitude. It is of vast importance and inestimable value, so give the same your most care careful and prayerful attention. Ponder it deeply, meditate much thereon, that the Father Himself has laid hold of depraved and hell-deserving sinners and made them the brethren of His dear Son. This too is "the Lord's doing: it is marvelous in our eyes" (Mat 21:42). Behold it with exultation and jubilation, that so blessed a privilege and high a dignity is yours as to be made the children of God, the high favourites of heaven, more closely related to God than the holy angels. How that should bow us in wonderment and worship before the throne of grace! What comfort and

² **deign** – stoop down to us; lower oneself.

³ **gratulation** – expression of joy or gratification at the sight of something.

consolation should it afford us amid the trials and tribulations of this life! How it should quicken our thankfulness and draw out our affections Godward—the chief motives and springs of Gospel obedience. How it should make us contented with our present portion; if you be a child of God, it matters little what your earthly possessions amount to.

This word “behold” is used all through Scripture on particular and special occasions. When the Lord God made mention of the incarnation and mission of the Messiah, He said, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel”; and again, “Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him...Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong *hand*, and his arm shall rule for him” (Isa 7:14; 40:10). When the Father would have us fix our hearts and minds on the person of His co-equal Son, He says, “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isa 42:1). When His forerunner introduced Him to the Jews he cried, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (Joh 1:29). During His earthly ministry, Christ prefaced many of His weightiest utterances with a “behold!” (Mat 12:42; 23:38; 25:6, etc.). After His ascension the Lord Jesus declared, “Behold, I come quickly” (Rev 22:7, 12). So that this word “behold” is used in the sacred page by the Father, by the Son, by the Holy Spirit, by the prophets, and by the apostles as introductory to the most blessed and momentous subjects revealed and recorded therein. John would have his little children contemplate this glorious truth of the Father’s love with reverence and awe, for he would stir up their pure minds to holy wonderment and admiration. He would have them engage their best thoughts thereon to the ravishing of their souls.

“*Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.*” The “behold” is intensified by the words immediately following. It is not simply take notice of and adore the love of the Father, but particularly the *sort of love* that is here in view, the wonderful expression thereof. The question has been raised as to whether the reference be to the *kind* or *degree* of His love. Personally, we consider that both ideas are included: its uniqueness and its greatness. According to its usage in the New Testament this expression is a contrastive one. When Gabriel addressed the virgin Mary as “thou that art highly favoured...blessed art thou among women,” she “cast in her mind *what manner of salutation this should be*” (Luk 1:28-29)—she was mystified by such an unprecedented experience. When the Saviour calmed the raging tempest with a word of command, His disciples marveled, saying, “What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!” (Mat 8:27); they have witnessed the supernatural. “What manner of persons you ought to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2Pe 3:11), which means (in contrast with the wicked) what paragons of virtue you should be—signifying not only the kind but also the degree of piety which God requires from us.

In view of the above examples (to which Luke 7:39 and Mark 13:1 may be added), “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” imports: Consider and adore the nature and extent, the marvel and magnitude, the uniqueness and superlative excellence of that love. It is in marked contrast, both in character and in greatness, with all other. It is incomparable, transcendent, infinite. Its cause is inexplicable; its effects are most glorious. Perhaps this is one reason why the divine benignity is here termed His *love*, rather than His *grace*. Love is especially sensitive: “God commendeth his love toward us,

in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom 5:8). Thomas Goodwin⁴ pointed out, “Of all things in God or man, love desires to have itself considered and taken notice of, as much as wisdom, and power, or any other thing; therefore he calls on them to behold *God’s* love. Above all, love desires notice taken by the parties beloved, to whom it is in special directed unto more than any other, for the emphasis lies in the speciality of it; therefore he would not have them run out in general thoughts admiring God’s love to mankind and giving His Son, but as having bestowed Him upon us,” His dear children.

Our present verse is one of many which illustrates the importance of observing the connection between a statement and the setting in which it occurs—failure to take into account the context conveys a wrong idea of its scope, that which is *qualified* being taken in an *unlimited* sense. Such is the case here; a wrong use has been made of it. It is appealed to by those who believe in what is termed “the universal Fatherhood of God”—i.e., that all men are spiritually God’s children. Apart from any other consideration, the principles of honest exegesis exclude such an interpretation of this sentence. The question, “Who are the ‘us’ upon whom the Father has bestowed His love?” requires answer. Obviously it is those whom the apostle is addressing. And who are they? 2:29 tells us plainly: they are those that give unmistakable evidence of being born of Christ by being doers of righteousness, and the only ones of whom that is the case are those who have received from Him the Holy Spirit (verse 27). Thus the “Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us” has no reference whatever to the unregenerate, nor is any individual warranted in regarding God as his heavenly Father unless he be walking in newness of life and bears His moral image.

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us.” John would have us look not only to the fountain-head or spring of our blessings, attentively [to] consider the matchless mercy shown us, but he would engage our hearts with that which has been communicated to us personally. John is not here calling upon the saints to believe the love wherewith God has loved them, nor is he bidding them receive the knowledge of it into their minds that they might rejoice over the same in their hearts. Rather is he exhorting them to contemplate that love in its grand original, in its freeness and sovereignty, in its nature and manner, in its gifts and blessedness; that it was actually bestowed upon them—that the Father had not only conceived love toward them, and willed it unto them, but that He had really and truly imparted it to them. That statement is almost parallel with “the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit which is given unto us” (Rom 5:5). That is what the “behold” directs our attention unto: to ponder and adore that love not abstractly but concretely; that is, not simply as it exists within the bosom of Deity, but in its outward manifestation, its actual bestowment upon us.

Love

We are invited to look upon and admire the Father’s love in its infinite condescension, in its gratuitous character, in its blessed application. It is indeed a great wonder that He

⁴ **Thomas Goodwin** (1600-1680) – born in Norfolk and educated at Cambridge, Goodwin became vicar of Holy Trinity Church, Cambridge. He became a Congregationalist in London in 1634. In 1639 persecution drove him to Holland, where he pastored a church at Arnheim. He returned to London as a member of the Westminster Assembly and leader of the Dissenting Brethren in it. In 1650 he was appointed president of Magdalen College, Oxford. He was a prominent member of the Savoy Assembly in 1658.

preserves in being such worthless wretches, supplying our temporal needs, and having any love for us. It is yet more wonderful that His love should be actually engaged toward us. But it is surely most wonderful of all that His love should be communicated to us—given freely, disinterestedly,⁵ abundantly. No other cause can be assigned why He should have set His heart upon them, other than His own determination: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace” (Eph 1:5-6). The good pleasure of the divine will is the originating cause; the manifestation of divine grace the end and issue of all. *That* love is not one merely of pity and compassion, but of delight and complacency: as it is written, “The LORD thy God in the midst of thee *is* mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zep 3:17). To take that into our minds and have it realized in our hearts, to live in the apprehension thereof, is to have real communion with the Father in all the blessedness of His love.

Consider the inestimable privilege which is here specified: “*that we should be called the sons of God.*” The word “called” does not here refer to God’s making us His children by an effectual or inward call from death unto life, but rather the acknowledging of us to be His children. It is not the act of regeneration that is in view, but the fact of our sonship that is affirmed. “In Isaac shall thy seed be called” (Gen 21:12) means, The children of Isaac shall be regarded and recognized as thy seed. Yea, of Christ Himself after the flesh, it was said to Mary, “that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God” (Luk 1:35), which obviously signifies *shall be acknowledged as such*, and not made so. Thus it is here: the Father owning the ones born of Christ, [as] mentioned in the previous verse. When the Father calls us His sons, it is not that He bestows the title upon us, but *averts* that relationship; as in Romans 9:26, where the apostle quotes from Hosea, “And it shall come to pass, that in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not my people; there shall they be called the children of the living God,” that is, God recognizes none as His children but those born of His Spirit and conformed to the image of His Son. And again, “If thou...call the Sabbath a delight” (Isa 58:13), [i.e.,] regard and treat it as such.

This is what we are called upon to behold: the fathomless love of the Father in owning us not merely as His subjects or servants, but as His sons. It is a particular and peculiar relationship that pertains to the regenerate, for it is not a blessing that is common to all men. It originates in the Father’s love. It is based upon our union with Christ, our being born of Him. To be a child of God is to be an heir of glory (Rom 8:17), and to be regarded as such by the Father is a confirmation of it. It is a very high honour indeed to sustain this relationship, far, far greater than any which this world can bestow. David asked, “Seemeth it to you a light thing to be a king’s son in law?” (1Sa 18:23); then what is it to be acknowledged as a son of the King of kings! “Since thou wast precious in my sight, thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee” (Isa 43:4) is His own blessed testimony. What weight should that have with us! What assurance it should convey to our minds! What wonderment it should evoke! Does it not move each of us to admit with the returning prodigal, I am not worthy “to be called thy son” (Luk 15:19)? How it should influence our

⁵ **disinterestedly** – without expectation for personal gain.

daily lives: "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also loved us" (Eph 5:1-2).

The qualities of the Father's love

We must not conclude this chapter without pointing out the principal qualities of the Father's love. It was *spontaneous*. Nothing outside God Himself moved Him to it. There was nothing in us to attract it, but everything to the contrary (Eze 16:5-6). It was *eternal* (Jer 31:3), for God chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, and entered into an everlasting covenant of grace with Him on our behalf. It was *sovereign, selective, and discriminating*, for He loves not all; it is peculiar to the elect—"Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto *thy people*" (Psa 106:4). It is *sacrificial*, for God "spared not his own Son" but delivered Him up to the cross in order that sinners might be saved (Rom 8:32). Christ shed not His blood in order to induce God to love His people; it was because God loved them that He provided such a costly offering for them. It is *infinite*. There is a depth to it that none can fathom, a height that none can reach, a length and breadth that cannot be measured. It is *invincible*. "Put not your trust in princes" said the Psalmist, for they will fail you; but God's love is reliable and cannot be thwarted. It is *immutable*, knowing no change (Mal 3:6), being without variableness or shadow of turning. Truly His love is *unique*.

How the Father's love is exercised

Equally blessed is it to observe how His love is exercised. Behold His *foreordaining* love: "In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children" (Eph 1:4-5). Deuteronomy 7:7-8 shows that election is the fruit of God's love; likewise does 2 Thessalonians 2:13 teach us. Behold God's *redeeming* love: "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1Jo 4:9-10). Behold His *regenerating* love: "But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ" (Eph 2:4-5). Behold His *drawing* love: "I have loved thee with an everlasting love, therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee" (Jer 31:3), sweetly wooing us unto Himself. Behold His *communicating* love: "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit" (Rom 5:5). Behold His *comforting* love: "even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation" (2Th 2:16). Behold His *preserving* love: "nothing does or can separate us from it" (Rom 8:38-39). Thus its manner is as matchless as its nature.

A brief word now on the present modification of our enjoyment of God's love. "*Therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not.*" Though so greatly honoured by the Father, that will not bring you into favour with those who are strangers to Him. No matter how lavish He be in the display of His love toward us, the unregenerate will not value us on that account. The natural man is devoid of spiritual discernment, and perceives not that the saints are the excellent of the earth (Psa 16:3), the blessed ones—rather does he regard them as fools and fanatics who are turning their backs on the happiness of life.

But so far from stumbling the Christian, or even discouraging him, it is just what he should expect. Nor will this disesteem be only from the openly godless: it is from

professors that the most cruel treatment will come. It was the religious element that persecuted Christ! They perceived not His glory, though it shone constantly before them in His character and conduct, His ministry and miracles; but they were blind, seeing in Him *no* beauty. Sufficient for the disciple to be as his Master: to be unknown, despised, opposed, is part of our conformity to Him (Rom 8:29).

The excellency of our sonship is not to be measured by the world's judgment, for its opinion is worthless. Sufficient for the believer to be assured that his Father loves him, that he has His approbation. Suffer not the slights of godless professors to dim your joy in Him.

THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

92. A Type of Christ

Throughout this lengthy series, one of our chief objects has been to show that the book of Joshua is very much more than an interesting and important history. That it is not only rich in spiritual value and moral instruction, but that it also contains much that anticipated and illustrated truth which is set forth more formally and doctrinally in the New Testament. While the later Scriptures are needed to explain not a little that is found in its earlier pages, they, in turn, often serve to throw light upon the other. For instance, if on the one hand, the Gospels and Epistles are required to interpret for us the wonderful prophecy of Isaiah 53—on the other hand, what a wealth of meaning we discover there to be in those words, “Christ our *passover* is sacrificed for us” (1Co 5:7), when pondered in the light of Exodus 12! The perfections of God are exhibited in the complete harmony which ever exists between His works and His Word, for from the beginning, He so ordered His dealings with men and so shaped the experiences of His people as to adumbrate future events of far greater magnitude.

As the opening words of the Epistle to the Hebrews state, it pleased God to employ quite a variety of methods and means in communicating to us the Holy Scriptures. Among the “divers manners,” wherein He spoke in time past, were dark parables and mysterious prophecies, as well as plain precepts and simple promises. Sometimes, the language was literal, at others, highly poetical. That divine revelation did not always come in narrative form. Much teaching during the old economy was by type and symbol. The Gospel was principally set forth by means of pictorial representations and religious ceremonies. The whole of the Mosaic ritual possessed an occult significance, those ancient institutions being invested with a prophetic meaning, forecasting things to come. The tabernacle, both as a whole and in all its parts, spoke of Christ. The Aaronic priesthood and its various sacrifices proclaimed an evangelical message, pointing forward to the great High Priest and His perfect sacrifice. If prophecy be “history written beforehand,” with equal truth can it be said that sacred history was made to foreshadow the grand scheme of redemption—while recording actual events, those events presaged future blessings.

“Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples [or “types”]; and they are written for our admonition” (1Co 10:11). The reference is to the experiences of Israel in the wilderness. The things which are there related were real historical incidents, and yet, at the same time, were spiritual omens, and it is in this latter respect that they are of chief interest and value for us today. In addition to all the instruction through the symbolical and ritualistic institutions of Judaism, it pleased God to prepare the minds of His people for the incarnation and advent of His blessed Son to this earth by making many of the outstanding characters of the Old Testament to prefigure His person and work, and to adumbrate some of the principal relations which He was to sustain. Adam prefigured His federal headship (Rom 5:13), Moses His prophetic office (Deu 18:18), Melchizedek His priesthood (Psa 110:4), David His kingship (Rev 5:5). As there is a fullness in Christ, which all the names and titles given in Scripture are insufficient to set forth, neither can all the personal types of Him adequately display the One who is “altogether lovely” (Song 5:16). But just as each designation emphasizes some particular perfection, so Abel, Isaac, Samuel, Jonah, etc., illustrated one feature or another in His character or career.

The same remarks hold good concerning the many emblems taken from nature to represent Him. And how varied and numerous they are! He is presented before us under the figures of light and life, of bread and water, as the door and the way, as shepherd and true vine—but the whole universe contains not that which is sufficient to portray the manifold glories of Christ. Every perfection is found in Him, fully developed, symmetrically proportioned. In Abraham, we see the activities of faith, in Moses, the spirit of meekness, in Caleb, whole-hearted devotion, in Daniel, uncompromising fidelity, in John, the apostle of love. But, in the Lord Jesus every grace is found. Utterly impossible is it, then, for finite creatures fully to reflect the excellencies of One who is infinite. At most, but a few could be exhibited by them, and those, very imperfectly. Nevertheless, they did, in their measure, foreshadow the Substance. Yet, they require to be interpreted in careful accord with the general Analogy of Faith. The light is a similitude of Christ (Joh 8:12), yet only in certain respects, for He does not wane. In like manner, though at many points there are unmistakable parallels between their lives, not everything recorded of the type was reproduced in the Antitype. The following are some of the ways in which Joshua foreshadowed Christ.

1. He was called of God for a stupendous undertaking, “For he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inhabit the land (Deu 3:28), as Christ also vanquishes all their enemies, and conducts the Church to heaven. 2. He was to serve as a shepherd to Israel (Num 27:15-18, and cf. Joh 10:3). 3. Morally, he was well qualified for the task, being one of two who “wholly followed the LORD” (Num 32:12), as Christ could say, “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). 4. God declared he should be eminently successful. “As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee” (Jos 1:5)—compare John 6:37-39.

5. His very name at once serves to identify him as a type. Originally, it was “Oshua” or “Hosea,” which signifies “salvation.” But later, he was called “Jehoshua” or “Joshua,” that is “JEHOVAH’s salvation” (Num 13:16), which, through the Greek, is precisely the same as the precious and more familiar name “Jesus,” as the marginal rendering of Acts 7:45 and Hebrews 4:8 shows. 6. That blessed name is “above every name” (Phi 2:9), and one of the

numerous ways in which God has caused its superlative excellency to be demonstrated is by placing it at the head of the first book in Scripture bearing a personal title—as the very first name mentioned in the New Testament is that of “Jesus Christ”! In all things, He has the pre-eminence. 7. The occasion when our hero was distinguished by a change of name is noteworthy, namely, as he was on the point of first entering the land of Canaan (Num 13:8, 16), as the name by which the incarnate Son was to be called was given Him just before He appeared on the earth (Mat 1:21). 8. He was the subject of prediction, for the promises of Exodus 23:20-23 received a germinal fulfilment in Joshua, as it also had its terminal accomplishment in Christ (see Vol. 24, p. 225 of the *Studies*, October 1945).

9. Of the Messiah, it was foretold, “Out of Egypt have I called my son” (Mat 2:15), and in striking accord therewith, Joshua was born and reared in Egypt, and, with the sole exception of Caleb, he was the only adult Israelite in the great exodus who survived the forty years’ wandering in the wilderness, and actually entered Canaan. 10. It is blessed to find that from first to last, he is seen as the successful saviour or deliverer of the people. The initial reference to him is in Exodus 17. It was on the occasion when Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim, “Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek” (Exo 17:9). From that brief statement, we gather that he had already attracted the notice of Moses as a man of valour and as one competent to command others. Nor were his expectations disappointed, “And Joshua discomfited Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword” (Exo 17:13). 11. Therein, he prefigured Christ as “the captain” of our salvation (Heb 2:10). 12. From the beginning, he appears as a successful warrior vanquishing the foes of the Lord. In type, Moses—as in the antitype, God—could say, “I have laid help upon one that is mighty” (Psa 89:19). 13. It is remarkable that this first exploit of our hero should be expressly recorded as a “memorial” (Exo 17:14)—just as Christ’s first miracle was (Joh 2:11). 14. We may also see here yet another line in the typical picture. The help of Christ is indispensable in subduing the flesh—of which Amalek is the figure (Exo 17:16).

The next reference to him is found in Exodus 24:13. There we learn that “Moses rose up, and his minister Joshua: and Moses went up into the mount of God.” Thus, at that early stage in his career, Joshua was the “minister” of Moses, the personal attendant of that eminent man of God. While there in the mount, the faith, patience, and fidelity of Joshua were put to a severe and protracted trial, for he was left alone during the whole time that Moses was in the presence of JEHOVAH. 15. Thus was he tempted or *tested* for “forty days and forty nights” (Exo 24:18 and cf. Mat 4:2!). In marked contrast with the unbelief and impatience of Aaron and the people in the camp below, Joshua trustfully and perseveringly awaited the return of his master. Thereby was he proved and manifested to be “a vessel unto honour, sanctified and meet for the Master’s use” (2Ti 2:21)—of conducting Israel into their inheritance. Proof that Joshua had remained in the mount during those forty days and nights is supplied by Exodus 32:15-18, for when Moses descended from the mount, Joshua was with him. But, let us now take a closer look at the several relations which Joshua sustained to Moses.

That there was an intimate connection between them is clear from the opening words of the book which bears his name, for there we are told that he was “Moses’ minister” (Jos 1:1). 16. Thus, Joshua is not set over against Moses as his antagonist, but rather as his

attender and supporter. Equally so, it is a serious mistake to regard the Law and the Gospel as being mutual enemies. The Son of God came here to “magnify the law, and make in honourable” (Isa 42:21 and cf. Rom 8:3-4). And He did so by fulfilling it (Mat 5:17)—by rendering perfect obedience to its precepts and enduring its full penalty on behalf of His sinful people. As Joshua was the minister of Moses, so Christ was “made under the law” (Gal 4:4)! But more, it is very plain from the book of Deuteronomy that the mission of Joshua was to *complement* that of Moses—to bring to a successful issue that which the former began. The one led Israel out of Egypt and through their wilderness journeyings. The other conducted them safely through the Jordan into the promised land. Thus, as the Law-giver is more excellent than the Law, Joshua is greater than Moses.

How striking it is that Joshua is presented in this twofold character, as both subservient and yet superior unto Moses, as taking orders from him (Exo 17:9) and then displacing him (Jos 1:1-2)! How the wonderful accuracy of the type appears therein! But there is yet a closer link between them. The commission Joshua received was, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest. This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth” (Jos 1:7-8). Joshua was to be guided and governed wholly by the written Word, which was something quite unprecedented. No man before Joshua had received orders from God to regulate all his conduct by the words of a book—Abraham, like Moses, received his instructions from the mouth of the Lord, but Joshua is peculiarly *the man of the Book*. 17. Thus, He accurately portrayed Him who declared, “In the volume of the book it is written of me” (Psa 40:7), and who lived by every word that proceeded out the mouth of God (Mat 4:4).

Numbers 27:18-22 records his ordination to be Israel’s leader, as Christ is in Matthew 3:13-17 and John 1:29-34. 19. His enduement—“Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him” (Deu 34:9), and “God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power” (Act 10:38). 20. Joshua is to be regarded chiefly in his *official* character. “Arise, go over to this Jordan, *thou*, and all this *people*, unto the land which I do give to them” (Jos 1:2). So it was as the Head of the Church that Christ acted and transacted (Eph 1:22-23). 21. He was divinely assured that “There shall not any man be able to stand before thee” (Jos 1:5), which was gloriously fulfilled in the Antitype (Joh 18:6; Psa 110:1). 22. “Unto this people shalt thou divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore unto their fathers” (Jos 1:6). So Christ is the Giver of rest (Mat 11:28). 23. At the same time was made good the word, “He shall cause Israel to inherit” (Deu 1:38 and cf. Eph 1:11). 24. He was divinely commissioned. “Have not I commanded thee?” (Jos 1:9). “I have not spoken of myself; but the Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment” (Joh 12:49).

25. Nevertheless, he was invested with full authority, so that he “commanded the officers of the people” (Jos 1:10). And Christ “taught them as one having authority” (Mat 7:29) and issued His commandments (Mat 28:20). 26. His lordship was publicly owned. “They answered Joshua, saying: All that thou commandest us we will do” (Jos 1:16). “His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it” (Joh 2:5). 27. Repeatedly we are told that “Joshua rose early in the morning” (Jos 3:1; 6:12), which

showed that his heart was in his work and that he diligently applied himself to the same, as did the Antitype (Mar 1:35; Luk 4:42). 28. He enforced the Scriptures. "Remember the word which Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you" (Jos 1:13 and cf. Mar 7:10, etc.). 29. Disobedience to him was fatal. "Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment...shall be put to death" (Jos 1:18 and cf. Joh 3:36; 12:48). 30. He taught the truth. "Joshua said unto the children of Israel, Come hither, and hear the words of the LORD your God" (Jos 3:9 and see Luk 4:17-21; 24:27).

31. "Then Joshua called the twelve men, whom he had prepared of the children of Israel" (Jos 4:4). "Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority" (Luk 9:1). 32. "On that day the LORD magnified Joshua in the sight of all Israel" (Jos 4:14). That was at the Jordan, when he was publicly authenticated unto his great mission. How very striking to note that the next thing recorded of him was his issuing commandments to the priests (Jos 4:16-17). So after God magnified Christ at the Jordan, we get the sermon on the mount, with its repeated, "I say unto you" (Mat 5-7). 33. In reporting favourably of Canaan. "The land, which we passed through to search it, is an exceeding good land" (Num 14:7). Joshua was virtually saying, "In my Father's house are many mansions," and "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Joh 14:2; Luk 12:32). 34. He was threatened by stoning (Num 14:10 and cf. Joh 8:59).

35. How striking it is to observe that Joshua instituted two "memorials" (Jos 4:8-9, 19-24) to mark the safe passage of Israel through Jordan, as Christ appointed baptism and the holy supper to memorialize our union with Him in death and resurrection! 36. In Joshua 5:3, Joshua is seen as the circumciser of the people, as in Colossians 2:11, believers are declared to be circumcised in Christ, "with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." 37. He kept the Passover (Jos 5:10 and cf. Luk 22:15). 38. In Joshua 5:15 and 11:8-9, 15, we behold the obedient servant, faithful in the discharge of his duty. Compare Philippians 2:8. 39. In Joshua 7:13, he is called upon to "sanctify the people"—"Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb 13:12). 40. In Joshua 6:25, we see him as the saviour of a harlot. Compare John 8:11.

41. "And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and did worship" (Jos 5:14). "And he went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed" (Mat 26:39). 42. He foretold things to come (Jos 6:26 and see 1 Kings 16:34 and cf. Mat 24:2). 43. "The LORD was with Joshua; and his fame was noised throughout all the country" (Jos 6:27 and cf. Mar 7:36-37). 44. Mark his zeal for the honour of God's great name (Jos 7:9 and cf. Joh 12:28). 45. In Joshua 10:10-14, we behold him as the great miracle worker. Compare Matthew 8:27. 46. In Joshua 7:19, we behold him as the judge. Compare Acts 17:30. 47. In Joshua 10:25, his faith in God is expressed. See Hebrews 12:2. 48. In Joshua 10:40-42, we see him as the mighty victor, and so too in Colossians 2:14 and Revelation 6:2. 49. In Joshua 9:23, we see him ratifying what his twelve princes had done. Compare Matthew 18:18. 50. In Joshua 10:43, he is seen as the preserver of all Israel. Compare John 10:28. 51. In Joshua 13:13 and 17:4, we see him as the fulfiller of God's promises. See 11 Corinthians 1:20. 52. Note his refusal to show partiality to members of his own tribe (Jos 17:14-18 and see Mat 20:20-23).

53. Behold him rebuking slackness (Jos 17:15 and see Luk 9:62). 54. He asks for his own inheritance (Jos 19:50-51 and see Psa 2:6). 55. He is a builder of his own heritage (Jos 19:50 and see Mat 16:19). 56. He is the fulfiller of the covenant (Jos 22:4). 57. He is the enforcer of holiness (Jos 22:5 and cf. Mat 5:48). 58. He is the bestower of blessing (Jos 14:13 and 22:6 and cf. Luk 24:50). 59. He is a rewarder of obedience (Jos 22:6, 8 and cf. Rev 22:14). 60. He concludes his ministry with discourses (Jos 23:24 and cf. Joh 13-17).

PROFITING FROM THE WORD

4. The Scriptures and Prayer

A prayerless Christian is a contradiction in terms. Just as a still-born child is a dead one, so a professing believer who prays not is devoid of spiritual life. Prayer is the breath of the new nature in the saint, as the Word of God is its food. When the Lord would assure the Damascus disciple that Saul of Tarsus had been truly converted, He told him, "Behold, he prayeth" (Act 9:11). On many occasions had that self-righteous Pharisee bowed his knees before God and gone through his "devotions," but this was the first time he had ever really *prayed*. This important distinction needs emphasizing in this day of powerless forms (2Ti 3:5). They who content themselves with formal addresses unto God know Him not, for "the spirits of grace *and* supplications" (Zec 12:10) are never separated. God has no dumb children in His regenerated family, "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" (Luk 18:7). Yes, "cry" unto Him, not merely "say" their prayers.

But will the reader be surprised when the writer declares it is his deepening conviction that, probably, the Lord's own people sin more in their efforts to pray than in connection with any other thing they engage in? What hypocrisy there is, where there should be reality! What presumptuous demandings, where there should be submissiveness! What formality, where there should be brokenness of heart. How little we really *feel* the sins we confess, and what little *sense* of deep need for the mercies we seek. And even where God grants a measure of deliverance from these awful sins, how much coldness of heart, how much unbelief, how much self-will and self-pleasing have we to bewail. Those who have no conscience upon these things are strangers to the spirit of holiness.

Now, the Word of God should be our directory in prayer. Alas, how often we have made our own fleshly inclinations the rule of our asking. The Holy Scriptures have been given to us "that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2Ti 3:17). Since we are required to "pray in the Spirit" (Jude 1:20), it follows that our prayers ought to be according to the Scriptures, seeing that He is their Author throughout. It equally follows that according to the measure in which the Word of Christ dwells in us "richly" (Col 3:16) or sparsely, the more or the less will our petitions be in harmony with the mind of the Spirit, for "out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Mat 12:34). In proportion as we hide the Word in our hearts, and it cleanses, moulds and regulates our inner man, will our prayers be acceptable in God's sight. Then

shall we be able to say, as David did in another connection, "Of thine own have we given thee" (1Ch 29:14).

Thus, the purity and power of our prayer-life are another index by which we may determine the extent to which we are profiting from our reading and searching of the Scriptures. If our Bible study is not, under the blessing of the Spirit, convicting us of the sin of prayerlessness, revealing to us the place which prayer ought to have in our daily lives, and is actually bringing us to spend more time in the secret place of the Most High, unless it is teaching us how to pray more acceptably to God, how to appropriate His promises and plead them before Him, how to appropriate His precepts and turn them into petitions, then, not only has the time we spent over the Word been to little or no soul enrichment, but the very knowledge we have acquired of its letter will only add to our condemnation in the day to come. "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves" (Jam 1:22) applies to its prayer-admonitions as to everything else in it. Let us now point out seven criteria.

1. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are brought to realize *the deep importance of prayer*. It is really to be feared that many present-day readers (and even students) of the Bible have no deep convictions that a definite prayer-life is absolutely essential to a daily walking and communing with God, as it is for deliverance from the power of indwelling sin, the seductions of the world, and the assaults of Satan. If such a conviction really gripped their hearts, would they not spend far more time on their faces before God? It is worse than idle to reply, "A multitude of duties which have to be performed crowd out prayer, though much against my wishes." But the fact remains, that each of us takes time for anything we deem to be imperative. Who ever lived a busier life than our Saviour? Yet, who found more time for prayer? If we truly yearn to be supplicants and intercessors before God and use all the available time we now have, He will so order things for us that we shall have more time.

The lack of positive conviction of the deep importance of prayer is plainly evidenced in the corporate life of professing Christians. God has plainly said, "My house shall be called the house of prayer" (Mat 21:13). Note, not "the house of preaching and singing," but of *prayer*. Yet, in the great majority of even so-called orthodox churches, the ministry of prayer has become a negligible quantity. There are still evangelistic campaigns, and Bible-teaching conferences, but how rarely one hears of two weeks set apart for special prayer! And how much good do their "Bible conferences" accomplish if the prayer-life of the churches is not strengthened? But when the Spirit of God applies in power to our hearts such words as, "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation" (Mar 14:38). "In every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Phi 4:6). "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving" (Col 4:2) Then are we being profited from the Scriptures!

2. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are made to feel that *we know not how to pray*. "We know not what we should pray for as we ought" (Rom 8:26). How very few professing Christians really believe this. The idea most generally entertained is that people know well enough what they should pray for, only they are careless and wicked, and so fail to pray for what they are fully assured is their duty. But such a conception is at direct variance with this inspired declaration in Romans 8:26. It is to be observed that that flesh-

humbling affirmation is made not simply of men in general, but of the saints of God in particular, among which the apostle hesitated not to include himself, "We know not what we should pray for as we ought." If this be the condition of the regenerate, how much more so of the unregenerate! Yet, it is one thing to read and mentally assent to what this verse says, but it is quite another to have an experimental realization of it, for the heart to be made to feel that what God requires from us, He must *Himself* work in and through us.

*I often say my prayers,
But do I ever pray?
Or do the wishes of my heart
Dictate the words I say?
I might as well kneel down
And worship gods of stone,
As offer to the living God
A prayer of words alone.*

It is many years since the writer was taught those lines by his mother—"Now present with the Lord"—but their searching message still comes home with force to him. The Christian can no more *pray* without the direct enabling of the Holy Spirit than he can create a world. This must be so, for real prayer is a felt need awakened within us by the Spirit, so that we ask God, in the name of Christ, for that which is in accord with His holy will. "If we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us" (1Jo 5:14). But to ask something which is not according to God's will is not praying, but presuming. True, God's revealed will is made known in His Word, yet not in such a way as a cookery book contains recipes and directions for preparing various dishes. The Scriptures frequently enumerate principles which call for continuous exercise of heart and divine help to show us their application unto different cases and circumstances. Thus, we are being profited from the Scriptures when we are taught our deep need of crying, "Lord, *teach* us to pray" (Luk 11:1), and are actually constrained to beg Him for the spirit of prayer.

3. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are made conscious *of our need of the Spirit's help*. First, that He may make known to us our real wants. Take, for example, our temporal needs. How often we are in some external strait, things from without press hard upon us, and we long to be delivered from these trials and difficulties. Surely *here* we "know" of ourselves *what* to pray for. No, indeed; far from it. The truth is that, despite our natural desire for relief, so ignorant are we, so dull is our discernment, that (even where there is an exercised conscience) we know not what submission unto His pleasure God may require, or how He may sanctify these afflictions to our inner good. Therefore does God call the petitions of most who seek for relief from external trials "howlings," and not a crying unto Him with the heart (see Hosea 7:14). "For who knoweth what is good for man in this life?" (Ecc 6:12). Ah, heavenly wisdom is needed to teach us our temporal "needs" so as to make them a matter of prayer according to the mind of God.

Perhaps a few words need to be added to what has just been said. Temporal things *may* be scripturally prayed for (Mat 6:11, etc.), but with this threefold limitation. First, *incidentally* and not primarily, for they are not the things which Christians are principally concerned in (Mat 6:33). It is heavenly and eternal things (Col 3:1) which are to be sought

first and foremost, as of far greater importance and value than temporal things. Second, *subordinately*, as a means to an end. In seeking material things from God, it should not be in order that we may be gratified, but as an aid to our pleasing Him better. Third, *submissively*, not dictatorially, for that would be the sin of presumption. Moreover, we know not whether any temporal *mercy* would really contribute to our highest good (Psa 106:18), and, therefore, we must leave it with God to decide.

We have inward wants as well as outward. Some of these may be discerned in the light of conscience, such as the guilt and defilement of sin, of sins against light and nature and the plain letter of the law. Nevertheless, the knowledge which we have of ourselves, by means of the conscience, is so dark and confused that, apart from the Spirit, we are in no way able to discover the true fountain of cleansing. The things about which believers do and ought to treat, primarily, with God in their supplications are the inward frames and spiritual dispositions of their souls. Thus, David was not satisfied with confessing all known transgressions and his original sin (Psa 51:1-5), nor yet with an acknowledgment that none could understand his errors, whence he desired to be cleansed from "secret faults" (Psa 19:12), but he also begged God to undertake the inward searching of his heart and find out what was amiss in him (Psa 139:23-24), knowing that God principally requires "truth in the inward parts" (Psa 51:6). Thus, in view of 1 Corinthians 2:10-12, we should definitely seek the Spirit's aid that we may pray acceptably to God.

4. We are profited from the Scriptures when the Spirit teaches us *the right end in praying*. God has appointed the ordinance of prayer with at least a three-fold design. First, that the great triune God might be honoured, for prayer is an act of worship, a paying homage to the Father as the Giver, in the Son's name, by whom alone we may approach Him, by the moving and directing power of the Holy Spirit. Second, to humble our hearts, for prayer is ordained to bring us into the place of dependency, to develop within us a sense of our helplessness, by owning that, without the Lord, we can do nothing, and that we are beggars upon His charity for everything we are and have. But how feebly is this realized (if it be at all) by any of us until the Spirit takes us in hand, removes pride from us, and gives God His true place in our hearts and thoughts. Third, as a means or way of obtaining for ourselves the good things for which we ask.

It is greatly to be feared that one of the principal reasons why so many of our prayers remain unanswered is because we have a wrong, an unworthy, end in view. Our Saviour said, "Ask, and it shall be given you" (Mat 7:7). But James affirms of some, "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts" (Jam 4:3). To pray for anything, and not expressly unto the end which God has designed, is to "ask amiss," and, therefore, to no purpose. Whatever confidence we may have in our own wisdom and integrity, if we are left to ourselves, our aims will never be suited to the will of God. Unless the Spirit restrains the flesh within us, our own natural and distempered affections intermix themselves in our supplications, and, thus, are rendered vain. "Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1Co 10:31), yet none but the Spirit can enable us to subordinate all our desires unto God's glory.

5. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are taught *how to plead God's promises*. Prayer must be in faith (Rom 10:14), or God will not hear it. Now faith respects God's promises (Heb 4:1; Rom 4:21). If, therefore, we understand not what God stands

pledged to give, we cannot pray at all. The promises of God contain the matter of prayer and define the measure of it. What God has promised, all that He has promised, and nothing else, we are to pray for. "Secret things belong unto the Lord our God" (Deu 29:29), but the declaration of His will and the revelation of His grace belong unto us, and are our rule. There is nothing that we really stand in need of but God has promised to supply it, yet, in such a way and under such limitations as will make it good and useful to us. So, too, there is nothing God has promised but we stand in need of it, or are some way or other concerned in it as members of the mystical body of Christ. Hence, the better we are acquainted with the divine promises, and the more we are enabled to understand the goodness, grace, and mercy prepared and proposed in them, the better equipped are we for acceptable prayer.

Some of God's promises are general rather than specific. Some are conditional, others unconditional. Some are fulfilled in this life, others in the world to come. Nor are we able of ourselves to discern which promise is most suited to our particular case and present emergency and need, or to appropriate by faith and rightly plead it before God. Wherefore, we are expressly told, "For what man knoweth the things of a man save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given us of God" (1Co 2:11-12). Should someone reply, "If so much be required unto acceptable praying, if we cannot supplicate God aright without much less trouble than you indicate, few will continue long in this duty." Then, we answer that such an objector knows not what it is to pray, nor does he seem willing to learn.

6. We are profited from the Scriptures when we are brought to *complete submission unto God*. As stated above, one of the divine designs in appointing prayer as an ordinance was that we might be humbled. This is outwardly denoted when we bow the knee before the Lord. Prayer is an acknowledgment of our helplessness, and a looking to Him from whom all our help comes. It is an owning of His sufficiency to supply our every need. It is making known our "requests" (Phi 4:6) unto God. But requests are very different from "demands." "The throne of grace is not set up that we may come and there vent our passions before God" (William Gurnall, 1617-1679). We are to spread our case before God, but leave it to His superior wisdom to prescribe how it shall be dealt with. There must be no dictating, nor can we "claim" anything from God, for we are beggars dependent upon His mere mercy. In all our praying, we must add, "Nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."

But may not faith plead God's promises and expect an answer? Certainly, but it must be *God's* answer. Paul besought the Lord thrice to remove his thorn in the flesh. Instead of doing so, the Lord gave him grace to endure it (2Co 12). Many of God's promises are promiscuous rather than personal. He has promised His Church pastors, teachers and evangelists, yet many a local company of His saints has languished long without either. Some of God's promises are indefinite and general, rather than absolute and universal, as for example Ephesians 6:2-3. God has not bound Himself to give in kind or specie, to grant the particular thing we ask for, even though we ask in faith. Moreover, He reserves to *Himself* the right to determine the fit time and season for bestowing His mercies. "Seek ye the LORD, all ye meek of the earth...it *may be* ye shall be hid in the day of the LORD's

anger” (Zep 2:3). Just because it “may be” God’s will to grant a certain temporal mercy unto me, it is my duty to cast myself upon Him and plead for it, yet with entire submission to His good pleasure for the performance of it.

7. We are profited from the Scriptures when prayer becomes *a real and deep joy*. Merely to “say” our prayers each morning and evening is an irksome task, a duty to be performed which brings a sigh of relief when it is done. But really to come into the conscious presence of God, to behold the glorious light of His countenance, to commune with Him at the mercy seat, is a foretaste of the eternal bliss awaiting us in heaven. The one who is blessed with this experience says with the Psalmist, “It is good for me to draw near to God” (Psa 73:28). Yes, good for the heart, for it is quietened. Good for faith, for it is strengthened. Good for the soul, for it is blessed. It is lack of this soul communion with God which is the root cause of our unanswered prayers. “Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he *shall* give thee the desires of thine heart” (Psa 37:4).

What is it which, under the blessing of the Spirit, produces and promotes this joy in prayer? First, it is the heart’s delight in God as the Object of prayer, and particularly the recognition and realization of God as *our Father*. Thus, when the disciples asked the Lord Jesus to teach them to pray, He said, “After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven.” And again, “God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba [the Hebrew for “Father”], Father” (Gal 4:6), which includes a filial, holy delight in God, such as children have in their parents in their most affectionate addresses unto them. So again, in Ephesians 2:18, we are told, for the strengthening of faith and the comfort of our hearts, “For through him [Christ] we both have access by one Spirit unto *the Father*.” What peace, what assurance, what freedom this gives to the soul—to know we are approaching our Father!

Second, joy in prayer is furthered by the heart’s apprehension and the soul’s sight of God as on the throne of *grace*—a “sight” or prospect not by carnal imagination, but by spiritual illumination, for it is by faith that we “see” Him who is invisible (Heb 11:27)—faith being the “evidence of things not seen” (Heb 11:1), making its proper object evident and present unto them that do believe. Such a sight of God upon *such* a “throne” cannot but thrill the soul. Therefore are we exhorted, “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16).

Thirdly, and drawn from the last quoted Scripture, freedom and delight in prayer are stimulated by the consciousness that God is, through Jesus Christ, willing and ready to dispense grace and mercy to suppliant sinners. There is no reluctance in Him which we have to overcome. He is more ready to give than we are to receive. So He is represented in Isaiah 30:18, “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you.” Yes, He waits to be sought unto; waits for faith to lay hold of His readiness to bless. His ear is ever opened to the cries of the righteous. Then, “Let us draw near with a true heart in *full assurance of faith*” (Heb 10:22), and “In *every thing* by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God,” and we shall find that peace which passes all understanding guarding our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phi 4:6-7).

SERVICE

Our present subject follows logically upon the theme of our last paper, for we are saved to serve, as was adumbrated of old in connection with God's earthly peoples, "And the LORD spake unto Moses, Go unto Pharaoh, and say unto him, thus saith the LORD, Let my people go, that they may serve me" (Exo 8:1). Pharaoh was a type of Satan, and the bondage of Egypt of our "serving divers lusts" (Ti 3:3). Israel's exodus from Egypt and their entering into covenant with JEHOVAH at Sinai (Exo 24:3-8) illustrates the experience of conversion, when a rebel against God throws down the weapons of his warfare and gives himself up to be ruled by His will. Salvation, then, is a change of masters.

There are but two masters, and they divide the world between them—sin and God. Every man serves one of them, but no man can *serve* both. Every man serves either sin or righteousness, God or the devil, giving his time and strength to one or the other. "For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit" (Rom 8:5). There is no middle or neutral state. Both of these services are entered by consent, "Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield yourselves* servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16). It is true there are degrees in this, some yielding up themselves more completely and entirely than others. Nevertheless, the service which the regenerate render to righteousness is quite voluntary.

The service of sin must be abandoned before the service of God can be entered, "But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God" (Rom 6:22). That order is unchangeable. By nature, we are not in subjection to God, for man is "born like a wild ass's colt" (Job 11:12). As they contemplate their unregenerate days, the Lord's people sorrowfully confess, "All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned every one to *his own way*" (Isa 53:6). Yes, that is the quintessence of sin—the determination to please ourselves. Thus it was at the beginning. Our first parents chafed at the divine restraint, and took matters into their own hands. But by grace, all this is altered. The language of a quickened soul is, "Lord, what wilt *thou* have me to do?" (Act 9:6).

True conversion is a being brought into subjection to God. First, the conscience is convicted of insubordination to God, and we are made to tremble for having so long and so grievously defied Him. His claims are now recognized and felt, and there is a broken-hearted repentance for having disregarded those claims. Second, there is a bending of our wills, a subduing of the fleshly principle within, and a being made desirous for God to rule us (Psa 110:3). Self-love, self-will, and self-righteousness receive their death wounds. Third, there is wrought in the heart a readiness to submit to God's way of salvation (Rom

10:3), so that we come as empty-handed beggars to receive out of the fullness of His grace. Fourth, there is a receiving of Christ Jesus as Lord (Col 2:6).

“O LORD our God, other lords beside thee *have had* dominion over us: but by thee only *will we* make mention of thy name” (Isa 26:13). In the past, “lord” self-pleasing, “lord” self-love, and “lord” self-gratification ruled us. But now, these are repudiated. We have become “servants to God,” and a servant is one who owns the authority of a superior, who is yielded to the will of his master and lives and labours to promote his interests. The true and normal Christian life consists of being in subjection to God. No longer is a quickened soul determined to have his own way at all costs, but instead, the dominating longing and purpose of his heart is to please and honour the Lord in all things. This is the result of a miraculous work of grace, for “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (2Co 5:17).

The best way to discover what is (ideally) signified by being a *servant of God* is to ponder the life of the Lord Jesus. Of Him, it is written, “Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant” (Phi 2:6-7). And what did that involve? This—being “made of a woman, made under the law” (Gal 4:4). Therefore are we told that, “Christ pleased not himself” (Rom 15:3). As He declared, “For I came down from heaven not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me” (Joh 6:38). And again, “I do always those things that please him” (Joh 8:29). That was the character of conduct of the perfect Servant. And, my reader, Christ has left believers “an example, that ye should follow his steps” (1Pe 2:21). Therefore does Christ say unto us, “Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me” (Mat 11:29). The “yoke” Christ assumed was that of unreserved submission to God’s will, and nothing less than that is what He requires from His followers.

We are not Christians at all unless we are servants of God, fully surrendered to His will, walking in obedience to His Word. Alas, Satan is deceiving so many today by leading them to suppose that they are savingly trusting in the “finished work” of Christ, while their hearts remain unchanged and self-will rules their lives. “He that saith, I know him, and keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him” (1Jo 2:4). What could be plainer than that? What a searching and solemn word also is in James 1:22, “Be ye *doers* of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.” There are many “hearers” of the Word, regular hearers, diligent hearers, in some respects, very interested hearers, yet, what they hear is not incorporated into the life. It does not regulate their ways. And God says that they who are not *doers* of the Word are “deceiving their own selves.” Alas, how many such there are in Christendom today! Those who are not downright hypocrites, but deluded souls. They suppose that because they are so clear on salvation being by grace alone, they are saved, and that because they sit under the ministry of a man who has “made the Bible a new Book” to them, they are growing in grace. How many imagine that the mere listening to a true servant of God, or reading his writings, is *feeding on the Word*. Not so! We only “feed” on the Word when we personally appropriate, masticate, and assimilate into our lives what we read or hear. Where there is not an increasing conformity of heart and life to God’s Word, then increased condemnation. “And that servant, which knew his lord’s will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with *many stripes*” (Luk 12:47).

God has given us His Word not only with the design of instructing us, but for the purpose of *directing* us—to make known what He requires us to do. In the Holy Scriptures, God has revealed the details of that service which He requires from us, and that, as it concerns every aspect and relationship of our lives. The first thing we need is a clear and distinct *knowledge* of our duty, and this entails a lifelong and prayerful searching of the Scriptures. And the first thing God requires of us is a conscientious practice, corresponding to our knowledge. “What doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?” (Mic 6:8). The Lord Jesus affirmed the same thing when He said, “Ye are my friends, if ye *do* whatsoever I command you” (Joh 15:14). Service, then, is a life of obedience, our inward and outward life being regulated by the divine precepts.

The service of God is one of *freedom*, yea, it is the only one where real freedom is to be found. Yet, that is the very opposite of the natural man’s idea. So thoroughly has sin perverted his judgment and blinded his mind, that he calls light darkness and darkness light, bitter sweet and sweet bitter. The unregenerate suppose that to be in subjection to God is the end of all freedom, and taking His yoke upon them is irksome bondage. Contrariwise, they imagine that the more they refuse divine restraints, the greater the liberty. Poor deluded souls! It is the service of sin that tyrannizes and enslaves. It is the one who willingly renders obedience to Him who is “the Lord’s *freeman*” (1Co 7:22). God does not force His people into service, but constrains them by His love, and their language is, “I will walk at *liberty*: for I seek thy precepts” (Psa 119:45). Nothing is more *honourable* than to be a dutiful servant of God, for it entails the smile of approbation from Him who is the King of kings. Nothing is more *pleasant* than to be subject to God’s commands, for it secures His favour and fellowship. What a rich reward is assured those who take His yoke upon them! The Lord Jesus declared, “Where I am, there shall also my servant be” (Joh 12:26). And again, “Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: *for ye serve* the Lord Christ” (Col 3:24). And yet again, “There shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it; and His servants shall *serve* Him” (Rev 22:3)—*now*, serving Him in the office, the shop, or the kitchen, *then*, serving Him in the courts of the Father’s house above.

REASONING REPUDIATED

“And lean not unto thine own understanding.” (Pro 3:5)

To “lean unto our own understanding” is to trust in our own wisdom. It is to be guided by what the world calls “common sense.” It is to rely upon the dictates of human reason. The objector may reply, “God has endowed me with the reasoning faculty, shall I not use it?” To which, we reply, that the highest act of reason is to bow before the wisdom of God, and be controlled by His unerring Word. But, alas, fallen men, in the pride of their hearts, had rather walk by sight than by faith, “Having the understanding darkened, being

alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph 4:18).

The connection between the words of our text, and the first clause in the verse, is not difficult to trace. It forms a supplementary word of warning. It is this very leaning unto our own understanding, or reasoning things out, which so often hinders us from trusting in the Lord with all our hearts. A similar supplementary warning is found in Matthew 21:21, added to, "If ye have faith," is, "and doubt not," which shows the danger of unbelief coming in afterwards and preventing the fruits of faith. So, the great obstacle against continued wholehearted trust in the Lord is leaning unto our own understanding.

To lean unto our own understanding is to rest upon a broken reed, for it has been deranged by sin. That is why we need constantly to seek counsel and instruction from the Scriptures, which are given not only to reveal the way to heaven, but also to guide us through this dark world (2Pe 1:9). God's Word is given to be "a lamp unto our feet, and a light unto our path" (Psa 119:105), and it is because we have failed to use this divine provision that we have had so many slips and falls. Experience shows that more grace is needed to repudiate our own wisdom than to abandon our own righteousness.

It is both solemn and humbling to see how many of the most eminent saints have failed at this point. Abraham, at the very time he responded to God's call to leave the land of his birth, instead of fully trusting the Lord to care for his wife as well as himself, leaned unto his own understanding, and instructed her to pose as his sister (Gen 20:13). Jacob, instead of trusting the Lord to make good His promise, relied upon human expediency and trickery. Moses, after God had graciously supplied the cloud to guide them by day and by night (Num 9:18-20), said to Hobab, "We are journeying unto the place of which the LORD said, I will give it you: come thou with us, and we will do thee good: for the LORD hath spoken good concerning Israel. And he said unto him, I will not go; but I will depart to mine own land, and to my kindred. And he said, Leave us not, I pray thee; forasmuch as thou knowest how we are to encamp in the wilderness, and *thou* mayest be to us instead of eyes" (Num 10:29-31).

The policy of Moses was dictated by natural prudence. Knowing that his father-in-law was thoroughly familiar with the wilderness, he concluded that he would be a suitable and competent guide. It is hard to imagine Moses being so foolish, yet, how often have we acted in a similar fashion! Other examples of this sad failing are often found in what is recorded concerning the twelve apostles. For example, when the Lord first announced to them His approaching death, Peter rebuked Him, saying, "Be it far from thee, Lord" (Mat 16:22). When He bade them give the multitude "to eat," they said, "Shall we go and buy two hundred pennyworth of bread?" (Mar 6:37). Yes, the exhortation of our text is much needed by us.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding" *when interpreting the Scriptures*. God's Word is not addressed to the intellect, but to the conscience and heart. And as soon as we begin reasoning over its contents, we land into a bog of error. The majority, if not all, of the false systems in Christendom are the outcome of the natural mind of men taking up the things of God. People single out certain fragments of Scripture, ignoring or repudiating all else, and, by a process of reasoning, have based thereon their schemes. Some dwell on the fact that God is gracious and that His mercy endures for ever, and from this promise they

reason that there can be no eternal punishment for anybody. Others single out the statements, "God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son" (Joh 3:16), and "Whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely" (Rev 22:17), and from these, reason that there cannot be such a thing as God having, from all eternity, chosen or elected certain ones to salvation. On the other hand, some appear to be very zealous of God's glory and imagine it is sullied when we press the responsibility of man. Because "Salvation is of the LORD" (Jon 2:9), they can see neither need nor warrant for the preacher to urge the ungodly to seek the Saviour. Because repentance and faith are the gifts of God, it seems senseless to hyper-Calvinists to call upon the unregenerate to repent and believe. All of these people are doing the very thing which our text forbids.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding" *by seeking to solve the mysteries of providence.* God has told us that His thoughts and ways are very different from ours (Isa 55:8-9). Yea, that they are "past finding out" (Rom 11:33). When a finite creature attempts to comprehend the Infinite, he is not only guilty of presumptuous sin, but is working against his own well-being. To philosophize about our lot, to reason about our circumstances, is fatal to our rest of soul and peace of heart. We cannot, by searching, find out God. In His Word, God has placed on record example after example to warn us against the folly and futility of reasoning about His providences. Take the case of Jacob. When Joseph seemed lost to him, Simeon had been left behind in Egypt, and request was made for Benjamin to leave too, he said, "All these things are against me" (Gen 42:36). He was walking by sight, judging things from their outward appearance, reasoning from what he saw. God was left out of his calculation and consideration. As the sequel showed, all those things were, really, working together for his good. What a warning for us! Take the children of Israel after their exodus from Egypt. "When Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid. And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness?" (Exo 14:10-11). Instead of trusting in the Lord with all their hearts, they leaned unto their own understanding. Once more, consider the apostles after the crucifixion. The death of their Master was the death of their hopes. Why? Because, instead of trusting in the Lord with all their heart, they leaned unto their own understanding! Once again we say, what a warning for us! Ah, Christian readers, when shall we learn that God's dealings with us are designed to wean *from* leaning unto our own understanding? If it takes us a long time to discover that we have no might of our own, and must draw strength from above, it takes us longer still to realize that we have no wit of our own, and must seek wisdom from on high.

"Lean not unto thine own understanding" *when engaged in the work of the Lord.* Alas, how much failure is there here! How much of the flesh enters into "Christian service"! How frequently worldly methods are employed! How often it is assumed that the end justifies the means! The only "end" which is worthy for any Christian to hold in view is the glory of God, and the only "means" becoming His servants are those which are prescribed in the Scriptures. Implicit confidence in God's promise that *His Word* shall not return unto Him void, and unquestioning obedience to all *His* arrangements, are what constitute all acceptable service. When Moses built a house for the Lord, though skilled in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, he was not permitted to use his own ingenuity, but had to make

all things according to the pattern shown him in the mount. And this is written for our learning. The teaching of Scripture on the subject of service and the thoughts of many professing Christians thereon differ widely. The Word teaches that the measure in which we glorify God is the measure in which we obey Him. But how many gauge it by *apparent results*! Those preachers who do most visible good in the conversion of souls and the edification of Christians are regarded as having brought most glory to their Master. But *that* is a false standard of measurement. It is walking by sight. It is leaning unto our own understanding. Again, those methods which seem to secure the best returns are almost everywhere looked upon as being most blessed of God, and, therefore, as most pleasing to Him. But the value of any action can be ascertained only through testing it by Scripture.

So many reason backward from effect to cause—the effect is good, therefore, it is supposed the cause must be. God is giving blessing, therefore, He must be pleased. Ah, it is so easy to lean unto our own understanding. Have we forgotten what happened when Moses was bidden to speak to the rock? Instead of so doing, in his anger, he smote it. In this, he sinned, and God judged him for it. Nevertheless, the water flowed forth! Did *that* “result” prove Moses was in the right? Certainly not! And it is recorded as a solemn warning against our arguing from effect to cause, against reasoning from results. It is so easy to persuade ourselves that we have God’s *approval* because we appear to have His *blessing*. If we leave the path marked out for us in His Word, we may have visible “results,” but we shall not have God’s approval. If we desire the latter, then, we must give constant heed to the divine injunction, “Trust in the LORD with all thine heart, and lean not unto thine own understanding.”

