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*“Search the Scriptures” John 5:39*

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

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## BUYING

“Buy the truth, and sell it not” (Pro 23:23). Such an injunction may appear to have a “legalistic” sound to some finical ears, but if Scripture be compared with Scripture, that erroneous impression should be removed. The use of the word “buy” in such passages as Isaiah 55:1, and Revelation 3:18, shows that no thought of human merits is signified. It is by no worthiness of ours that salvation is obtained. A little thoughtful meditation indicates that this figure is a very suggestive and instructive one. The fact that we are here exhorted to “buy the truth” implies and imports the following things: First, that by nature we do not possess it, for we do not “buy” what is already ours. Second, that it is needful and valuable, for only fools will purchase things they consider of no use or worth. Third, that we desire it. Fourth, that we must go to the lawful Owner of it. Fifth, that we are willing to part with something to obtain it. Sixth, that we actually make it our own, for that is what the “buying” of a thing does. Seventh, that we now make use of it.

When our Lord said unto Pilate, “Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice,” the Roman governor responded with, “What is truth?” (Joh 18:37-38). Probably those words were uttered contemptuously, for Christ made him no answer—what value does a politician place upon truth! A short time before, the Saviour had said to the Father, in the hearing of His disciples, “Thy word is truth” (Joh 17:17)—not simply “contains the truth,” but is so. It is expressly denominated “the word of truth” (2Ti 2:15), and that because its Author is omniscient. It is inerrant throughout: without the slightest inaccuracy—“Thy word is true from the beginning” (Psa 119:160). That is what renders it of inestimable value. Living as we are in a world of liars (Psa 58:3), truth is an exceedingly rare commodity. Sin has darkened man’s understanding and unhinged his mind, so that ignorance and error, prejudice, and superstition abound on every side. How thankful then should we be that we have to hand, and in our own mother tongue, a revelation from Him that cannot lie.

The importance of truth appears from the absolute authority of Him who is its Author, from the miracles He has wrought to confirm it, from its own salutary tendency and the blessed fruits which it produces. It is by the truth that we are made “wise unto salvation” (2Ti 3:15). It is by the truth we are made free from the servitude of sin (Joh 8:32, and compare Psa 119:45). It is by the truth that we are “sanctified” (Joh 17:17). Apart from God’s Word, I can know nothing whatever of His everlasting love and sovereign grace, nothing of His will for me, nothing of the destiny awaiting me. Christ—in His wondrous person, peerless perfections, glorious offices, and so great salvation—is the sum and substance of it. Yet, indescribably precious as it is, the solemn fact remains that by nature, none of us has any love for the truth, but rather, a strong antipathy to it. We prefer to be flattered and encouraged to believe the best about ourselves; and therefore, the Lord Jesus had to say of those to whom He ministered, “And because I tell you the truth, ye believe me not” (Joh 8:45).

The truth is as free as it is precious, yet, paradoxical as it may sound, it has to be *bought*. A price has to be paid before it is actually made ours. Though God’s Word is a gift to us, it has to be purchased by us; and there is nothing more incongruous and inconsistent in that statement than there is in affirming that he enjoys the greatest *liberty* who lives in completest subjection to God. To “buy” the truth is a deliberate and voluntary act: “I have *chosen* the way of truth,” said the Psalmist (Psa 119:30), and there must be given us a desire and love for the same ere we are willing to do so. Yet the absence of such a desire is no valid excuse for those who are unwilling to purchase it. “Wherefore is there a price in the hand of a fool *to get* wisdom, seeing he hath no heart to it?” (Pro 17:16). The answer is, To constitute him a responsible creature. That “price in the hand” is the rationality, the capability, the time and opportunity to acquire wisdom; and the absence of a heart for it in no wise extenuates his indifference and neglect.

Alas, what millions of such “fools” there are, with no “heart” to buy that which is more valuable than gold, “yea, than much fine gold” (Psa 19:10)! As one has said, “They would rather lose it than labour for it; rather go sleeping to hell than toiling to heaven.” That which is “more precious than rubies” (Pro 3:15) is to the majority of our fellows of less worth than a pebble. “Herod eyed it with curiosity (Luk 23:8), Pilate with indifference (Joh 18:38), the Jews with scorn (Act 13:46). Enough that it should have a place in our creed, but none in our hearts. The world is preferred to heaven, time to eternity, and the immortal soul perishes in folly”—Charles Bridges (1794-1869). It is only when we desire them that we heed that injunction: “Buy those things that we have *need of*” (Joh 13:29). Few indeed are willing to pay the price, for truth is a costly thing to come by *honestly*, entailing considerable expense and pains. But the more we pay for it, the

more we shall prize it. Rare things are always the most expensive, but he who really values and loves the truth deems no price too high.

“Buy the truth” (Pro 23:23). Something has to be *parted with* in order to secure it—pride, prejudice, and presumption—so that we be willing to receive it as a little child. “Buy the truth” means *make it your own*, and that can only be done by personal effort and diligent application. “My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou *criest* after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and *searchest* for her as for hid treasures; *Then* shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God” (Pro 2:1-5). *That* is part of the price which has to be paid: an open ear, an applied heart, earnest prayer to God, diligent searching of the Scriptures. Like Mary, we must fix the words of God in our mind and ponder them in our heart (Luk 2:19). Truth has only become *ours* when it is actually reduced to experience and practice, and therefore, another part of the price for buying it is our conforming to it in heart and life; and that, in turn, requires daily self-examination and supplication.

Many are content with substitutes for “the truth.” They fondly imagine they are “sound in the faith,” when in reality the great enemy of souls has deceived them with a spurious counterfeit. And when they are lovingly and faithfully warned, they are unwilling to put their beliefs to the proof, and *weigh* them “in the balances of the Sanctuary.” Though they are told that “many false prophets” (1Jo 4:1) have gone and are still going forth, they are loath to think that they have been beguiled by them. Truth cannot be secured by us till we are prepared to suspect our orthodoxy and bring every article of our creed to the test of Holy Writ. Very few are ever recovered from the abyss of error, because they are not willing to search diligently and impartially for the truth and embrace it wherever it is to be found, or whatever be the cost. They prefer the sanction of the names of “great men,” rather than a “thus saith the LORD.” Pray daily for a right understanding of His Word.

“The truth,” like its Author, is *one*—we never read in Scripture of “truths”: yet, as He has many perfections or attributes, so His Word has many parts or branches. It is not a portion of truth, but “the truth” itself we are bidden to buy. Alas, that so many content themselves with fragments thereof. Nothing short of the whole truth is what each of us should earnestly covet and seek—every particle of it, for, as one has well said, “The very filings of the gold are invaluable.” “Set thine heart upon *all* that I shall shew thee” (Eze 40:4). Nevertheless, the most eager and earnest purchaser will find, as Joshua did near the close of his life, “there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed” (Jos 13:1). But though that be the case, we must strive to acquire and assimilate more and more of it. Never rest content with your knowledge thereof, for at best, it is but meager. Remember, you buy a thing in order to make use of it. As one quaintly summarized it: *know* it in the head—memorize it; *stow* it in the heart—lovingly meditate upon it; *show* it in the life—be regulated by it; *sow* it in the world—yet cast not your pearls before swine (Mat 7:6).



## THE PRAYERS OF THE APOSTLES

### 67. 1 Peter 5:10-11, Part 3

We are now to consider, fifth, the *petition* of this prayer: "Make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you" (1Pe 5:10), or (compare 1Th 3:11; 5:23), as the Greek in each instance requires, "*himself* make you perfect," etc. There is far more contained in these words than appears on their surface, and the fullness of their meaning can be discovered only by a patient searching of the Scriptures, thereby ascertaining how the several terms are used in other passages. We regard the "*himself* make you perfect" as the principal thing requested, the three words that follow being in part an amplification and in part an explanation of the process by which the desired end is reached—though each of the four words requires to be considered separately. Ancient expositors, who went into things much more deeply and thoroughly than do our moderns, raised the question as to whether this prayer receives its fulfilment in the present life or the life to come. After carefully weighing the pros and cons of their arguments, we have come to the conclusion—taking into view the remarkable scope of the Greek word *katartizo*, here rendered "perfect"—that this petition is granted a twofold answer—here and hereafter—and shall therefore take in both in our comments.

*Katartizo* imports "to make perfect" in the sense of, first, by adjusting or articulating so as to produce a flawless object; and, second, to restore an object which has become imperfect. That the reader may be enabled to form his own judgment, we will set before him the passages in which the Greek word is variously translated elsewhere. In each passage quoted, the word or words placed in italics is the English rendering of the Greek word for "perfect" in our text. When the Saviour said, "Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou *prepared* [or 'fitted,' margin] me" (Heb 10:5), we are to understand, as Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) said, "That body was formed or articulated by the Holy Spirit, with the human soul, in all its parts, in one instant of its union with the Son of God," and was immaculately holy, impeccable, and without spot or blemish. The word is used again to express the finishing and perfect consummation of God's work of the first creation: "The worlds were *framed* by the word of God" (Heb 11:3): they were so completed that nothing more was needed to their perfection, for, as Genesis 1:31 tells us, "And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, it was very good."

But this same Greek word has a very different sense in other passages. In Matthew 4:21, "*mending* their nets," which denotes the repairing of what had been damaged. "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, *restore* such an one in the spirit of meekness" (Gal 6:1), where it signifies such a restoring as of a limb that is out of joint. No doubt this was one of the significations which the apostle had in mind, for those for whom he prayed had been disjointed or scattered by persecutions. Paul also had this shade of meaning before him when he exhorted the divided Corinthians to "be *perfectly joined together* in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1Co 1:10). Again, the word is sometimes used to express a supplement or the supply of a deficiency, as in 1 Thessalonians 3:10, that we "might perfect that which is lacking in your faith," for "lacking" implies a want. Once more, the word occurs in Hebrews 13:21, "Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight," where the apostle prayed that the saints might advance to further degrees of faith and holiness in this life.

It will thus appear, from its usage in other passages, that the Greek word rendered "perfect" in our present text may signify "*himself* make perfect those *degrees* of grace," which are necessary in order to full growth, and does not necessarily imply any personal fault or failure in those prayed for—as a child is not to be blamed for not having yet reached the full stature of an adult or attained unto his knowledge; as God has promised to bring to perfection the good work He has begun in the souls of His people (Phi 1:6). A Christian may walk up to the measure of grace received without any willful divergence in his course, and still be imperfect, as was the case with the most favoured of God's children—"Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect" (Phi 3:12). There have been, and are, some privileged souls who never left their first love, who followed on to know the Lord, who (as to the general tenor of their lives) carried themselves according to the light received, yet needed further additions of wisdom and holiness to make them yet more fruitful branches of the Vine, and unto a consummation of holiness in heaven.

An example of this appears in the case of the Thessalonian saints. Not only had they experienced a remarkable conversion (1Th 1:9), but they conducted themselves in the most God-honouring and exemplary

manner, so that the apostle gave thanks to God always for them on account of their “work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ” (verses 2 and 3). Not only were their inward graces healthy and vigorous, but in their outward conduct, they were made “ensamples to all that believe” (verse 7). Nevertheless, Paul was most anxious to visit them again, that he “might perfect that which is lacking in your faith” (1Th 3:10): that is, that further blessed accessions of grace might be theirs in order to a yet closer walking with God, and resistance to and overcoming of temptations. To that faith which rests on Christ for pardon and acceptance with God, which He bestows at conversion, there is also a faith of conscientious acceptance, the “full assurance of understanding” (Col 2:2); and to that, God has in store the rich experience of “joy unspeakable and full of glory” (1Pe 1:8) and the making of our calling and election sure, so that an “abundant entrance” into His Kingdom is begun in this life (2Pe 1:10-11). Yet this “perfecting” also applies to the *recovery* and restoration of lapsed Christians, as is evident from Peter’s own case.

But suppose that God should thus mend and restore those overtaken in a fault, yet might they not fall again? Yes, indeed, and evidently, Peter had such a contingency in view and therefore added “stablish”: that is, that they should be so confirmed that they would not fall away. For the fickle and vacillating, it was a request that they should be no more tossed to and fro, but fixed in their beliefs. For the discouraged, that having put their hands to the plough, they should not look back because of the difficulties of the way. For those who were walking closely with the Lord, that they might be established in holiness before God (1Th 3:13), for the most spiritual are daily in need of supporting grace. The Greek word signifies to make firm or confirm, occurring in “there is a great gulf *fixed*” (Luk 16:26). It is found again in connection with Christ, and is translated, “he *steadfastly set* his face to go to Jerusalem” (Luk 9:51). It is the word used by the Lord to Peter himself: “When thou art converted, *strengthen* [or ‘fix firmly’] thy brethren” (Luk 22:32)—re-establish those who have yielded to temptation. Likewise, Paul desired “to establish...and to comfort...concerning [their] faith” the Thessalonian saints; and that, in relation to temptation or trial (1Th 3:2, 5).

But though we may be so confirmed by the grace of God that we cannot totally and finally fall away, yet we are weak, and may be labouring under great infirmities; and therefore, the apostle added to his petition, “strengthen” you. The Greek word is not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but from its position here between “stablish” and “settle,” it appears to have the force of invigorating against weakness and corruptions—“be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man” (Eph 3:16). The term occurs in its negative form in Romans 5:6, “For when we were yet *without strength*, in due time Christ died for the ungodly”: in our unregenerate state, we were entirely devoid of ability and enablement to do those things which are pleasing to God. Not only is the spiritual impotency of an unregenerate soul styled “without strength,” but the state of the body when dead is expressed by the same Greek word: “It is sown in *weakness*” (1Co 15:43)—that is, lifeless, utterly devoid of any vigour. But contrastively, “it is raised in power”: endued and furnished with all abilities, even such as the angels have (Luk 20:36), who “excel in strength” (Psa 103:20). Thus, this request for the “strengthening” of the saints is to be understood of supplies of grace which would energize weak hands and feeble knees, and enable them to overcome every opposing force.

Though we be confirmed so that we shall never be lost, and though we be strengthened to bear up against trials, yet we may become shaky and uncertain; therefore, Peter added “settle”: that ye may be unremitting in your faith in Christ and love to God. The Greek word is rendered “founded” in Matthew 7:25, “laid the foundation of” in Hebrews 1:10, and “grounded” in Ephesians 3:17; and in our text, it appears to be used as the opposite of waverings of spirit and doubtings of heart. I pray that you may be able confidently to say, “I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him” (2Ti 1:12); and that you may not turn from the path of duty because of the opposition you encounter. No matter how good be the tree, if it be not settled in the earth, but moved from place to place, it will bear little or no fruit. How many might trace the unfruitfulness of their lives to the unsettled state of their hearts and judgments! David could say, “My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed,” and therefore, he added: “I will sing and give praise” (Psa 57:7). This too is a blessing which God only can impart: “Now to him that is of power to stablish you” (Rom 16:25); yet, as Deuteronomy 28:9 and 2 Chronicles 20:20 show, we must use the appointed means.

Himself “make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). The ultimate object seems to be mentioned first, and then the steps by which it is reached; but, whether regarded in conjunction or singly, they all have to do with our practical sanctification. The piling up of these emphatic terms indicates the difficulty of the Christian’s task, and his urgent need of constant supplies of divine grace. The saint’s war-

fare is one of no common difficulty, and his needs are deep and many; but he has to do with “the God of all grace” (1Pe 5:10)! Nevertheless, it is both our privilege and duty to draw upon Him by importunate supplication (Heb 4:16; 2Ti 2:1). God has provided grace answerable to our every need, yet it flows through the *means* He has appointed. God will “perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle” us in response to fervent prayer, by the instrumentality of His Word, through His blessing unto us the ministry of His servants, and by sanctifying unto us the discipline of His providences. He who has given His people a sure hope will also give everything necessary unto the realization of the thing hoped for (2Pe 1:3), but we have to sue out the same by prayer (Eze 36:37).

Sixth, its *qualification*: “After that ye have suffered a while.” That clause is connected with both “who hath called us unto his eternal glory” and the petition Himself “make you perfect,” etc. The apostle did not pray that believers should be removed from this world as soon as they be regenerated, nor immediately relieved their sufferings, but “after a while”—or, as the Greek signifies, “after a *little* while”—because all time is short in comparison with eternity, and for the same reason the severest afflictions are “light” when set over against the “eternal weight of glory” that is awaiting him (2Co 4:17). The sufferings and the glory are inseparably connected, for “we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God” (Act 14:22). “If so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together” (Rom 8:17)—no cross, no crown (Luk 14:27). All who have suffered for Christ’s sake on earth will be glorified in heaven, but none shall be glorified save those who—in some form or other—were “made conformable unto his death” (Phi 3:10). Some of the believer’s sufferings are from the hand of God’s providence, some from “false brethren,” some from the profane world, some from Satan, some from indwelling sin. Peter speaks of “manifold temptations” or “trials” (1Pe 1:6-7), but they are counterbalanced by “manifold grace” (1Pe 4:10), and both are directed by “the manifold wisdom of God” (Eph 3:10)!

The abounding grace of God does not preclude trials and afflictions, but has “appointed” (1Th 3:3) its objects thereto. Then let us not be dismayed or cast down by them, but seek grace to get them sanctified to us. Sufferings are *necessary* to the saints on various accounts. First and foremost, that the members be conformed to their Head. We are informed that “For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings” (Heb 2:10). Sufficient then for the disciple to be as his Master: that he should be made “perfect” “*after*...[he has] suffered a while” (1Pe 5:10). Peter himself had alluded to this in his first chapter: “The sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1Pe 1:11). It was the divine will that even the incarnate Son should “learn obedience” or submission by the things which He suffered (Heb 5:8). As He declared, “The Son of man *must* suffer” (Mar 8:31; Luk 9:22)—because God had ordained it (Act 4:28). Christ’s being tempted by the devil had not its origin in his malice, for “then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness *to be* tempted of the devil” (Mat 4:1). Remember that, dear tried one: the Saviour Himself entered the kingdom of God “through much tribulation”; and therefore, “in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted” (Heb 2:18).

Second, the God of all grace has made this appointment because His grace is best seen in sustaining us and is most manifest by relieving us; hence, we find the Throne of Grace magnified by giving us grace “to help in time of need” (Heb 4:16). Much of the glory of grace appears in supporting the weak, in delivering the tempted, and in raising the fallen. The Lord exempts not from conflict, but maintains us in it. Effectual calling ensures our final perseverance, yet it does not render needless continual supplies of grace. As Thomas Manton (1620-1677) expressed it, “God will not only give them glory at the end of their journey, but bears their expenses by the way.” Third, because God will thereby confound those who are opposed to us. “Grace *reign[s]*” (Rom 5:21), and the greatness of a monarchy is demonstrated by subduing rebels and vanquishing enemies. God raised up the mighty Pharaoh in order to show forth His own power. In the context, as we have seen, He suffers the devil, as a roaring lion, to rage up and down, oppose and assault us; but only to foil him, for “shall the prey be taken from the mighty” (Isa 49:24); and shortly, God will “bruise Satan under [our] feet” (Rom 16:20).

Fourth, suffering is necessary for the trying and proving of our graces: “The trying of your faith worketh patience” (Jam 1:3). “That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1Pe 1:7). It is the winds of tribulation which separate the wheat from the chaff, the furnace which reveals the difference between the tinsel and the gold—the stony-ground hearer is offended and falls away “when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word” (Mat 13:21). So, too, for the purifying

and the brightening of our hope, our hearts have to be more completely weaned from this world before they become *set* upon things above.

Fifth, “Heaven is not simply joy and happiness, but a glory, and a glory *won by conquest*—‘to him that overcometh’ [are the promises made] in each one of the seven epistles of Revelation 2 and 3. It is a crown won by mastery, and so by striving, according to certain laws set to be observed by those that win (2Ti 2:5). The glory won by conquest and masteries is the more valuable. The portion Jacob won ‘with my sword and with my bow’ was the one he reserved for his beloved Joseph (Gen 48:22). We are more than conquerors through Him that loved us”—T. Goodwin.

It is a mistake (made by some) to restrict either the “afflictions” of 1 Peter 5:9 or the “suffer[ing]” of verse 10 to *outward* persecutions and trials: all inward assaults (whether from our own lusts or Satan), and so all temptations whatsoever, are to be included. The context requires this, for the “be sober, be vigilant” (verse 8) respects our lusts; and the call to “resist the devil” (Jam 4:7) relates to our inward temptations unto sin. The experience of all saints requires it, for their acutest pangs are occasioned by their corruptions. Moreover, as T. Goodwin pointed out, the setting before the eyes of our faith, God as “the God of all grace” argues the same; for His grace stands principally ready to help us against inward sins and temptations to sin. Furthermore, the *all* of His grace extends not only to all sorts of external miseries, but to all internal maladies, which are our greatest grief, and which need His abundant grace above all other, and which His grace chiefly respects. His grace is the grand remedy for every evil to which the believer is subject. Some are guilty of worse sins after conversion than before, and unless the God of *all* grace was their God, where would they be?

“After that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you” (1Pe 5:10). This may well be regarded as a request for grace to enable us to obey the exhortation, “Be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord” (1Co 15:58)—i.e. constantly opposing sin and striving to be holy in all manner of conversation. This request receives a part fulfillment in this life, but a complete and more transcendent one in heaven. Saints are advanced to further degrees of faith and holiness, and after seasons of wavering and suffering, God strengthens and establishes them in a more settled frame of spirit. Yet only in our fixed condition after death will these blessings be fully ours. Not till then shall we be “made perfect” in the sense of fully conformed to the image of God’s Son. Our hearts will be “stablish[ed]...unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints” (1Th 3:13). Only then will all our weakness end and our bodies be “raised in power” (1Co 15:43). Then indeed shall we be eternally “settled,” for the divine promise is, “Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out” (Rev 3:12).

Seventh, its *ascription*: “To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen” (1Pe 5:11). “The apostle, having added prayer to his doctrine, here added praise to his prayer”—Leighton. It expressed the apostle’s confidence that the God of all grace would grant his request. He was assured that what he had asked for on behalf of the saints would be to the divine “glory,” and that the divine “dominion” would infallibly bring it to pass. There is thus a practical hint implied for us in this closing doxology: it intimates *where* relief is to be obtained and strength is to be found in the midst of our suffering, namely by eyeing the glory of God, which is the grand end He has in view in all His dealings with us, and by faith’s occupation with God’s dominion—if *His* be the dominion, and He has called us unto His eternal glory, then what have we to fear? So certain is our glorification (Rom 8:30) that we should give thanks for it now. The abundant and infinite grace of God is engaged to effect it, and His omnipotent power guarantees the performance of the same.



## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JOSHUA

### 47. *Victory*

“And it came to pass, when the king of Ai saw it, that they hastened and rose up early, and the men of the city went out against Israel to battle, he and all his people, at a time appointed, before the plain; but he wist not that there were liers in ambush against him behind the city” (Jos 8:14). In Scripture, those words, “it came to pass,” are something more than a formal manner of prefacing a narrative, or introducing an incident—signifying the accomplishment of the divine foreordination, that it occurred precisely as God had decreed, for He has predestined the actions of the wicked equally with those of the godly. Exactly what it was that they “saw” we know not, but they failed to investigate it, and, being regulated by their senses rather than by reason, precipitately rushed forward to death. Infatuated by his previous success (Jos 7:5), unconscious that he was fighting against the Almighty and flinging himself upon the thick bosses of His bucklers (Job 15:26), the king issued forth to what he confidently believed would be an easy victory, yet only to fulfill God’s purpose (Ecc 3:1). Upon further reflection, we are now satisfied that that is the meaning of the clause which has puzzled the commentators—“at a time appointed” (Jos 8:14), i.e. of God, for He has fixed the hour of every man’s death (Job 7:1).

“And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness” (Jos 8:15). They pretended to be filled with terror, and instead of making a firm stand against these Canaanites, they gave ground, and probably fled in some disorder toward the wilderness. Yet however distasteful and degrading it was for the main body of Israel to feign themselves cowards, it was necessary for them to do so if their plan was to succeed. In like manner, there are times when some Christians are required to act a humble part, perhaps a humiliating one, if the task which is assigned others of their brethren is to be duly accomplished. All cannot occupy positions of equal honour in the church, any more than can all the servants of a king’s household be equal—scullery maids are as essential as lords in waiting. In the days of David, there were some who girded on their swords and accompanied him to the battlefield, while there were others who were required to remain behind and guard the provender; but it is blessed to observe that when the spoil was to be divided, he gave orders, “As his part is that goeth down to the battle, so shall his part be that tarrieth by the stuff: they shall [take] part alike” (1Sa 30:24).

“But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him...And the eye cannot say unto the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary...Now ye are the body of Christ, and members in particular” (1Co 12:18, 21-22, 27). In our remarks upon Joshua 8:9, we pointed out how admirable was the self-sacrificing, obedient, and courageous spirit displayed by the thirty thousand: how that they murmured not at being deprived of their rest through being sent away “by night,” or at the dangerous post assigned them. Equally praiseworthy was the conduct of this force which accompanied Joshua. They might have asked, Is it for *this* that thou hast brought us from Gilgal? Have we had a long uphill march only to turn tail as soon as the enemy advances toward us? Or, Since the LORD has delivered Ai into our hands [verse 1], what need is there for us to play so ignominious a part and cut so sorry a figure before the heathen? Instead, they meekly complied with their orders and loyally supported their leader.

But in that to which we have just called attention, we should recognize the secret power of God at work, overcoming their natural scruples and inclining them to co-operate fully with their brethren, and thus fulfill His will. This too should be regarded as a part of His gracious answer to the prayer of Joshua 7:6-9. How wondrously He acts when we truly humble ourselves before Him and are concerned for the honour of His name! He makes things work smoothly, yea, work together, when He shows Himself strong in our behalf. Yet how often we miss perceiving the same through failing to observe closely His providences and connect the same with our previous cries unto Him for help. For the sake of our more hyper-Calvinistic readers, it may be well for us to point out here that there is nothing more “inconsistent” in admiring the virtues of these men of Israel while ascribing the same unto the gracious operations of God than there was in the apostle’s telling the Colossians that he “rejoiced” in their orderliness and the “stedfastness of your faith in Christ” (Col 2:5), when he knew full well that God was the Author of those spiritual fruits. Because there are no official powers or authorities “but of God,” that does not preclude our rendering “honour to whom honour” is due (Rom 13:1, 7)!

“And Joshua and all Israel made as if they were beaten before them, and fled by the way of the wilderness” (Jos 8:15). Once again, there is something more here than that which is of historical interest, or even of practical instruction for our hearts. Little as it may appear at first glance, yea, utterly incongruous as it may sound, Joshua’s conduct on this occasion—when considered in the light of the immediate sequel—plainly and strikingly foreshadowed Him who though He was rich, yet for our sakes, became poor, that we through His poverty, humiliation, and suffering might be rich. “What Joshua did in this stratagem is applicable to our Lord Jesus, of whom he was a type. Joshua conquered by yielding, as if he had himself been conquered: so our Lord Jesus, when He bowed His head and gave up the spirit, seemed as if death had triumphed over Him, and as if He and all His interest had been routed and ruined; but in His resurrection, He rallied again, and gave the power of death a total defeat; He broke the serpent’s head by suffering him to bruise His heel. A glorious stratagem”!—Matthew Henry (1662-1714). How wonderful are the ways of God, who not only set the sun in the heavens, gave to the lamb its characteristics, appointed the fruit-bearing vine to be a figure of Christ, but also shaped Old Testament events so as to prefigure His person and work!

“And all the people that were in Ai were called together to pursue after them: and they pursued after Joshua, and were drawn away from the city” (Jos 8:16). This too was “of the LORD,” and it should be marvelous in our eyes. Therein we behold the success which God gave to Joshua’s ruse, when his men made a feint as though they were beaten; or rather to his obedient compliance with the orders he had received from the Lord. Not only had the king of Ai gone out with the whole of his military force—sallying forth with the exultant cry: “They flee before us, as at the first” (Jos 8:6)—but when Israel was seen in flight, the non-combatant citizens were summoned to join in their pursuit; thereby rendering still easier the task assigned the thirty thousand. It is obvious that without the divine blessing on this plan, such a considerable body of men could no more have remained concealed, than could Jacob’s device in Genesis 30:37-43 have prospered. “See how the prosperity of fools destroys them, and hardens their hearts to their ruin”—M. Henry. Because God had used the king of Ai on a former occasion to chastise Israel, he and his people were puffed up with conceit.

Note carefully the precise expression used here by the Holy Spirit: the inhabitants of Ai were “drawn away from the city” (Jos 8:16). Those words set forth another of the secret operations of the Most High in His government of this world. In our last, we called attention to the *restraining* influence which He exerts upon men; here His *impelling* power is seen. To His people, He says “I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I *drawn* thee” (Jer 31:3); yet not with physical force, but a moral suasion which overcomes their native enmity and frees the will from the dominion of sin. “I drew them with cords of a man, with bands of love” (Hos 11:4): not by external force, such as is used on brute beasts, but by cogent arguments, tender inducements, constraining motives and obligations, such as are suited to work on the understandings, affections, and wills of rational creatures; the same being rendered effectual by the supernatural power and application of the Spirit. Such divine drawing is absolutely essential in order to the saving of sin’s slaves and the freeing of Satan’s captives, for as the Lord Jesus so plainly declared, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me *draw* him” (Joh 6:44)—a truth so repugnant to the proud heart of the natural man, that when Christ uttered it, “From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him” (Joh 6:65-66).

Not only does the Word of Truth make known this drawing power of God upon His elect, but it reveals Him putting forth the same upon the non-elect, though in their case, He presents a very different set of reasons and inducements before their minds. “And I will harden Pharaoh’s heart, that he shall follow after them” (Exo 14:4)—impelling Egypt’s king to pursue His people unto the Red Sea. So too with the other kings of Canaan: “For it was of the LORD to harden their hearts, that they should come against Israel in battle, that he might destroy them utterly” (Jos 11:20). Unto Barak, Deborah announced that the LORD God of Israel had declared: “And I will draw unto thee to the river Kishon Sisera, the captain of Jabin’s army, with his chariots and his multitude; and I will deliver him into thine hand” (Jdg 4:7). “And I will bring thee against my land, that the heathen may know me” (Eze 38:16) in the power of “my fury” (verse 18). “I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat” (Joe 3:2). So it was with the Aites: the Hebrew word rendered “drawn away” in Joshua 8:16 is translated “pluck” in Jeremiah 22:24, “pull out” in Jeremiah 12:3, and “be rooted out” in Job 18:14.

“And there was not a man left in Ai or Bethel, that went not out after Israel: and they left the city open, and pursued after Israel” (Jos 8:17). Further proof was this that the king of Ai had been given up to a spirit

of madness, employing every male at his disposal to pursue Israel, leaving none to guard the city or secure his own retreat in case of emergency. It is hard to conceive a greater piece of folly unless it be that of Pharaoh, who, after witnessing such manifest demonstrations of the power and wrath of Jehovah upon Egypt, should, immediately after the death of all the firstborn, pursue Israel, and then attempt to march through the Red Sea. The one equally with the other was blinded by pride and obstinacy. Yet observe well that those in verses 17 “went out” of their own volition! Thus does Scripture uniformly present together the *two* sides of man’s free agency and God’s invincible operations, without any philosophical explanation of the “consistency” of the two things. God “draws” irresistibly, yet without the slightest violation upon man’s will or the least impairment of his accountability. If we deny either the one or the other, then we flatly repudiate what is clearly revealed in Holy Writ.

What has just been alluded to is certainly profoundly mysterious, yet that is no valid reason why we should reject it, for if we believe only that which we can fully understand, our creed will be a very small one. Even our consciousness bears witness that we act voluntarily, and the ungodly will themselves, at times, admit that a “higher power” constrained them to follow such and such a course; nor do they feel that they were reduced to “mere machines” in so being. Viewing the contents of verse 17 in connection with the warfare of the saint, we are there shown that the hand of every man of this world is, spiritually speaking, *against him*. Many of them are indeed kind-hearted, generous, and benevolent unto a Christian in temporal things; but (all unconscious to themselves) they are antagonistic to his *eternal* interests. Their influence is entirely earthly, and never heavenly. What was the attitude of the world toward Christ? Without a single exception, hostile. Pharisees and Sadducees, priests and scribes, politicians and the common people, the Roman soldiers, and even the crucified malefactors, reviled Him, until a miracle of grace transformed one of them into a worshipper. If we were more like Christ, we should experience more of the world’s enmity and persecution.

“And the LORD said unto Joshua, Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand toward Ai; for I will give it into thine hand. And Joshua stretched out the spear that he had in his hand toward the city” (Jos 8:18). He had waited for a further word from Jehovah before taking this action. As it was at Jericho, so here at Ai: each stage of the process in the capturing and destroying of the city must be ordered by the LORD. Thus it was with Moses in every project in which he engaged. So also with the apostles, teaching us that the servant of Christ must not do anything without His authorization. It is indeed blessed to observe here that Joshua’s hand was the *first* one to be outstretched against Ai. Is not the lesson for us therein plain? It is when the antitypical Joshua stretches forth His hand on our behalf that the best time has come for us to act. The need for the LORD to inform Joshua *when* to stretch forth his hand is obvious, for it served as a signal to those in ambush, and *that* required to be precisely timed—when the men of Ai had left the city—so that they might swiftly seize their opportunity.

The LORD did not fail His servant, but at the crucial moment, gave him the word of command: “Stretch out the spear that is in thy hand” (Jos 8:18). That action was not only designed as a signal to his men in ambush, but, as verse 26 makes clear, by the same, He directed the whole engagement, until complete victory was achieved. Now was drawing near the hour of Joshua’s triumph, for he was on the point of leading Israel to conquest, of which his outstretched spear was the symbol. That too was a foreshadowing of our blessed Saviour. It seems evident from verses 22 and 24 that throughout the contest, Joshua must have occupied some position of eminence, from which he gave orders to his troops; and therein, he was a figure of Christ on high. The last night, but one before the fight, lodging among the people (Jos 8:9)—as did Christ with His friends at Bethany. The next night, alone in “the midst of the valley” (Jos 8:13)—the symbol of deep humiliation (Isa 40:4; Luk 1:52), as our Lord spent His in Gethsemane and the judgment halls of the Jews and Romans. Then fleeing before the foe as if beaten (Jos 8:15), as Christ, in apparent defeat, was put to death by His enemies. Now assured by God of victory (Jos 8:18), as He has promised to make Christ’s foes His footstool.

In concluding this article, we propose to consider more closely the lines of typical teaching in Joshua 8. In the course of our comments, we have indicated some of the practical applications to be made of its contents, and have pointed out the several respects in which Joshua again foreshadowed our Lord. But now we must inquire, What contribution to the particular theme of this book is made by the capturing and destroying of Ai: What are the principal lessons there for us concerning the Christian’s warfare? That question is more easily asked than answered. We must acknowledge we have experienced more difficulty here than when pondering what was before us in Joshua 3 and 4. But that is to be expected. First, because

Israel here was only enjoying God's second best, and where *that* be the case His showing Himself strong on our behalf is curtailed, and acts of folly on our part raise, as it were, a cloud of dust, which prevents our perceiving so clearly the workings of God. Second, because the *human* side of things is more prominent. At first, the babe is carried, but the time arrives when it must learn to use its own feet: so with the saint, who has to develop his graces and subdue his lusts.

Both in the crossing of the Jordan and the capturing of Jericho, the LORD did all for Israel, working miracles on their behalf; but in connection with Ai, much more was required *from them*. Thus it is in the spiritual life. Regeneration is a miracle of grace, wherein we were entirely passive; but in order to our growth in grace and spiritual progress, all our faculties have to be called into action. The "lambs" Christ carries in His bosom (Isa 40:11), but the "sheep" are required to follow Him (Joh 10:27). Immediately after conversion, the power of God is so put forth that usually the believer experiences a season of peace from the assaults of Satan and the stirrings of his inward corruptions. But soon he becomes conscious of the serpent's enmity and is made painfully aware of the powerful enemies within his own heart; and the fight of faith gradually becomes fiercer, and he meets with some humiliating falls in the contest. Yet we can discern the wisdom of God therein, promoting our good. If He continued to do all for us without our active concurrence, and if nothing but victory was our uniform experience, we should quickly become proud and self-sufficient—as was the case with Israel after Jericho! But under divine chastenings, and through His instructions, we are taught how to turn former defeats into successes—by using the means appointed and counting upon God's blessing the same.



## THE DOCTRINE OF REVELATION

### 31. *In Glory, Part 4*

We have shown that there is a real and radical difference between the death of a believer and that of an unbeliever, and having contemplated some of the accompaniments of a Christian's departure from this world, we are thus now ready to consider how he exists in the disembodied state. It is not to be wondered at that the unregenerate should be thoroughly befogged at this point, for they are so materialistic that they find it very difficult to form a definite concept of anything that is incorporeal and intangible. But those who, by grace, enjoy a real communion with Him who is "Spirit" (Joh 4:24) ought not to flounder on this matter, for they have proved by experience how much more important is the soul than the body, and how infinitely more real and satisfying are spiritual objects than the perishing things of time and sense. So far from regarding his soul as a mysterious, nebulous, and indefinable thing, the believer looks upon it as a living, intelligent, sentient being—his *real self*. We should view a disembodied soul as one which has cast off its earthly clothing and is now appareled in a garment of light, or, to use the language of Scripture, "clothed in white raiment [or 'white robes']" (Rev 3:5; 6:11).

At death, the soul of the saint is freed from all the limitations which sin had imposed upon it; and its faculties are then not only purified, but elevated and enlarged. It will be like a chrysalis emerging from its cramped condition, or a bird liberated from a cage, now free to spread its wings and soar aloft. It is true the body is a component part of man's complex being, yet we must endeavour to view it in a due proportion. Which is the more important: the tenant or his tenement, the individual or the tent in which he resides? It must be borne in mind that the soul derives not its powers from the body. That is clear from the divine account of man's creation: after his body had been formed, and as a separate act, God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" (Gen 2:7). The mind is the noblest part of our being, and therefore, it must find exercise and satisfaction in the disembodied state; otherwise, we should not be "blessed" or happy (Rev 14:13) immediately after death. "It is the mind maketh the man; it is our preferment above the beasts that God hath given us a mind to know Him"—Thomas Manton (1620-1677).

"The soul can and does operate without the use of bodily organs in its *present* state, and in many things, stands in no need of them. The rational soul thinks, reasons, and discourses without the use of them. Its powers and faculties need them not: the will is directed and guided by the understanding, and the understanding has to do with objects in the consideration of which bodily organs are noways assisting—as in the consideration of God, His nature, and perfections; of angels and their nature; and of a man's own spirit, and the things of it which it penetrates into, without the help of any of the instruments of the body. It can consider of things past long ago, and of things very remote and at a great distance; and such objects as are presented to it by the senses, it reasons about them without making use of any of the organs of the body. And if it can operate without the body, it can exist without it; for since it is independent of it in its operations, it is independent of it in its being; and as it can exist without it, it can act in that separate state of existence without it. Wherefore, since it dies not with the body, it is not affected as to its operations by the absence of it, nor at death becomes insensible as that is"—John Gill (1697-1771).

Yet, obvious as is what has been pointed out above, the majority of Christians seem to suppose that it is impossible for us to form any definite ideas of what it is to be disembodied, or of that state into which the saint enters at death, or of what the medium is by which he will know, enjoy, and have fellowship with the Lord in that state. While they remain content with such slothful ignorance, it is not to be expected that any further light will be vouchsafed them: "According to your *faith* be it unto you" (Mat 9:29) holds good at this point as much as it does anywhere else. Not a curious and unbridled imagination, but a Scripturally informed and regulated faith, and *faith* ever has to do with God and His written Word. If His Word be searched prayerfully, diligently, and expectantly for divine instruction on these things, it will not be confounded. From some of the accounts given in the sacred volume, we may gather some real apprehensions on these subjects, yea, much more than is generally attended to. To these accounts we shall now turn.

The case of those servants of God who were favoured with ecstatic raptures and supernatural visions while their bodies were inactive and senseless shows most clearly that the soul can function without any assistance from the body. Micaiah said unto the king of Israel, "I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left" (1Ki 22:19). Though the prophet was in the body, it was not with his natural eyes that he gazed upon such a scene as that. Again, a similar

sight was granted Isaiah; and in addition, he listened to the very words of the seraphim as they cried unto one another, "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isa 6:1-5); and yet the eyes and ears of his body could no more have "seen the King, the LORD of hosts," nor heard those acclamations of divine homage than could those of our bodies lying cold in death. God is Spirit, incorporeal, and His ineffable glory cannot be seen by the corporeal senses of any creature: it was therefore a visionary representation which was made to the spirit of His messenger.

Ezekiel tells us that while among the captives by the river of Chebar, "the heavens were opened, and I saw visions of God" (Eze 1:1). At the close of the first chapter of his prophecy, he describes one of those celestial revelations. He says, "And above the firmament that was over their heads [i.e. the cherubim] was the likeness of a throne, as the *appearance* of a sapphire stone: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it. And I saw as the colour of amber, as the appearance of fire round about within it, from the appearance of his loins even upward, and from the appearance of his loins even downward, and I saw *as it were* the appearance of fire, and it had brightness round about. As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of *the likeness* of the glory of the LORD" (Eze 1:26-28). From the words we have placed in italics, it is obvious that the prophet was under the supernatural influx of the Holy Spirit, and that his spiritual faculties were granted a visionary sight of the Saviour before He became incarnate.

The experiences of Daniel also supply some illumination on the matter we are now considering: the capabilities of the soul abstracted from the body. First, he informs us: "After this I saw in the night visions, . . . and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire. A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him" (Dan 7:7-10). "Then I lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and behold a certain man clothed in linen, whose loins were girded with fine gold of Uphaz: His body also was like the beryl, and his face as the appearance of lightning, and his eyes as lamps of fire, and his arms and his feet like in colour to polished brass, and the voice of his words like the voice of a multitude. And I Daniel alone saw the vision" (Dan 10:5-7). A sight of Christ was there presented to the eyes of the prophet's mind. They were opened and raised to an extraordinary degree; and they were closed again after the vision passed. His faculties were supernaturally elevated, or he could not have seen Christ thus. He tells us, "There remained no strength in me" (Dan 10:8), so that he was in the body. As his body did not prevent his seeing this vision, neither will the absence of ours prevent us seeing Christ by sight and vision of soul.

A very similar, though perhaps not identical, case is that of Peter, of whom we read that "he fell into a trance, And saw heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending unto him, as it had been a great sheet knit at the four corners, and let down to the earth: Wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts of the earth, and wild beasts, and creeping things, and fowls of the air. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill, and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean. And the voice spake unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common. This was done thrice: and the vessel was received up again into heaven" (Act 10:10-16). The dictionary defines a trance as "a state in which the soul appears to be absent from the body, as to be rapt in vision," because at such a time, all the normal activities (save that of the heart) and sensibilities of the body are suspended. The most remarkable feature of this incident is that Peter was not only able to see and hear, but also to reason and speak, to express his religious prejudice; and his "Not so, Lord" demonstrates that sin has defiled our inner being, and that the soul must needs be purified before it can be admitted into the immediate presence of God on high.

Still more pertinent is the case of the apostle Paul. In 2 Corinthians 12, he relates an extraordinary experience with which God had favoured him. He declares, "I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful [or 'possible'—margin] for a man to utter," and this he recites as an illustration of "visions and revelations of the Lord" (verses 1-4). It is remarkable that twice over in those verses, the apostle should register his inability to determine whether or not he was in the body at the time he was translated to heaven and heard and saw such wondrous things. If the soul were incapable of cognizing objects when it is detached from the body, then most assuredly, Paul had never been at any such loss as he here mentions. From the

language employed, it is clear that the soul *is capable* of attending to the most important and blessed things of all when it is *out of the body*, and thus, that death will not deprive it of its capabilities and sensibilities.

Finally, the experience which the beloved John had in the Isle of Patmos supplies us with further help on the point. He too was favoured with a vision of Christ, an account of which he gives in the first chapter of the Revelation, and the effect which it had upon him. The glorious form of the Saviour shone forth before him beyond what it did on the mount of transfiguration. The splendour of it was more than the apostle could bear in his embodied state—"And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead" (Rev 1:17). He further described how the Lord Jesus acted toward him and what He said to him: "And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last." He tells us that immediately prior to this supernatural experience, "I was in the Spirit" (Rev 1:10), or, more literally, "I became in spirit": that is, he passed out of the condition of normal human consciousness into the supernormal. The same expression occurs again in Revelation 4:2, "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven": he was elevated to a new mode of consciousness and sphere of existence, in which mortal imperfections had no place, in which all bodily activities and sensations were completely suspended, and in which the soul was wholly under a divine influence, entirely abstracted from all corporeal things, being fully controlled by the spirit.

It appears to the writer that, from the accounts cited above, from both the Old and New Testaments, we may form some real, definite, and spiritual conceptions concerning the saints in their disembodied state. The soul will be detached from all occupation with natural things and entirely fixed on divine objects. The mind or spirit will be lifted above the natural or mortal state and be illumined and engaged with supernatural things. As those saints were favoured with visions of Christ while in their bodies, yet their bodies were of no use to them at that time, so all of the redeemed when dismissed from their bodies are granted a view of Christ for which their physical senses are not needed—such a complete and immediate view of Him as fills them with admiration and adoration. If it be asked what will be the medium by which disembodied believers will know, enjoy, and have fellowship with the Lord, the answer is furnished by, "For now we see through a glass, darkly [‘Now we see in a mirror obscurely’—Amer. R.V.]; but then face to face" (1Co 13:12). The "mirror" is the Word (Jam 1:23-25) and the medium of perception is faith; but in heaven, the soul will have an unobscured sight of Christ and the whole invisible world will be opened, so that we shall see as we are seen or "know as we are known," by means of intuitional light and knowledge, crystal-clear intellectual and spiritual views of Christ and the Father in Him, by the indwelling Holy Spirit.

At the separation of the soul from the body, it—or better, *he* or *she*—enters into a state of which he has had no previous experience, yet the anticipation of the same should not occasion the slightest uneasiness, for Christ Himself passed out of the world and entered that state the same way. It is no untrodden path, for thousands of God's people have already gone over it. Immediately upon its dismissal from the body, such a change passes upon the soul that regeneration is then completed by being instantaneously and for ever delivered from the whole being of sin and death. As we cannot enter Christ's spiritual kingdom of grace except by the new birth and a translation out of darkness into His marvelous light, neither can any of His redeemed (prior to His second coming) enter the kingdom of Christ's glory save by death. At that moment, mortality is swallowed up of life. While death will bring a great difference in me, it will make none in my Saviour to me. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living" (Rom 14:8-9). While I am in the body, Christ ministers to me and supplies my every need; and when He summons me to leave the body, that will afford Him opportunity to express His love to me in a new way, introducing me into heaven, there to behold His glory.

Luke 16:9 represents another aspect of the experience of saints upon their leaving of this scene. "And I say unto you, Make to yourselves friends of the mammon of unrighteousness; that, when ye fail, they may receive you into everlasting habitations." As Thomas Goodwin (1600-1680) remarked, "Those everlasting habitations there mentioned are in heaven, where that are many mansions." This verse is part of the parable of "the unjust steward" (verse 8); and here, the Lord made a practical application of the same. He bids His disciples emulate the wisdom (though not the wickedness) of him who has an eye to the future. The "mammon of unrighteousness" is the coinage of this world, in contrast with the "true riches" (verse 11) of the Spirit. The saints are to expend their earthly means, however small, in works of piety and charity, and thereby "make to [themselves] friends." "Our Lord here exhorts us to provide for ourselves a comfortable reception to the happiness of another world, by making good use of our possessions and enjoyments in this

world”—Thomas Manton (1620-1677). The soul’s passage out of this life is termed a “failing”—of the body—and its entrance on high as a being welcomed home by those to whom he had ministered upon earth. “The poor saints that are gone before to glory receive them that in this world distributed to their necessities”—Matthew Henry (1662-1714).

The above verse is one of several which make it clear that there will be the personal recognition of the saints in the next life. The question was asked Martin Luther (1483-1546) a little while before his death whether we should know one another in the other world, to which he answered by observing the case of Adam “who knew Eve to be flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone whom he had never seen before.” How did he know this, asked M. Luther, “but by the Spirit of God, by revelation?” and then he said, “So shall we know parents, wives, and children in the other world, and that more perfectly.” To which we may add, How otherwise can those of whose conversion and edification Gospel-ministers have been the instruments be their “joy, or crown of rejoicing” in the day to come (1Th 2:19), unless the one is able to identify the other? A further hint on the subject is supplied by the apostles knowing Moses and Elijah on the mount, for they had never beheld them previously, nor seen any statue or picture of them, for such was not allowed among the Jews.

It has long been our conviction that the glorious scene which the three apostles witnessed on the holy mount was designed (among other ends) to furnish us with a glimpse of the blessed condition and delight of *the glorified*. So ravished was Peter by the sight that he exclaimed: “Lord, it is good for us to be here” (Mat 17:4), and would fain have remained there. As T. Manton said: “So was he affected with joy in the presence and company of Christ, and Moses and Elijah appearing with Him, that all his natural comforts and relations were forgotten.” They were granted a foretaste of the life to come, for those who enter that blessed state will never desire to come out of it. The account of the transfiguration is prefaced by the statement: “And after six days” (Mat 17:1) and “It came to pass about an eight days after” (Luk 9:28): thus it was a *seventh day* (the perfect number!) event—a foreshadowing of the eternal Sabbath. The central figure was Christ Himself in resplendent glory. Talking with Him were Moses and Elijah: the one who had survived death; the other who had never expired—a type of those saints alive on earth at Christ’s second coming.

Not only does the above incident teach us that the departed saints preserve their individual identities and are recognizable, but the fact that the apostles were permitted to see them, and to hear their discourse with Christ, intimates that *the society of saints* is a part of heaven’s blessedness, and that the Old Testament saints (represented by Moses and Elijah) and those of the New (the apostles) are all together with Christ. Is not the same fact indicated by our Lord’s words, “And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven” (Mat 8:11)? Still another passage which witnesses to the truth that the company of the redeemed and our fellowship with them is an adjunct of heaven’s blessedness is Hebrews 12:22-23, where among other privileges, we are said to have come to “the spirits of just men made perfect.” That same passage also makes mention of “an innumerable company of *angels*.” If the Bethlehem shepherds were filled with joy as they heard the heavenly hosts praising God, what delight will it give us to mingle our voices with the angelic choirs! Yet these things are but secondary, for as Samuel Rutherford (1600-1661) well said: “*The Lamb* is all the glory in Immanuel’s land,” or, as Matthew 17 shows us, Moses and Elijah soon faded from the apostles’ view, and they “saw no man, save Jesus only” (verse 8)!



## GLORIOUS SINAI

Following upon the gracious annunciation and assurance which Moses received from Him, the LORD bade him, "Hew thee two tables of stone like unto the first: and I will write upon these tables the words that were in the first tables, which thou brakest" (Exo 34:1). It will be remembered that as Moses descended from the mount with the first tables, he beheld the whole congregation engaged in an idolatrous and lascivious dance before the golden calf; and that in holy terror and righteous indignation at such a sight, he flung the tables to the ground. After rebuking and chastening the offenders, he had returned to the LORD, and by his intercession, "[made] an atonement" for Israel (Exo 32:30, etc.), averting His wrath and restoring them to His favour. Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound. But grace does not annul the claims of God's government nor set aside the requirements of His holiness, but "reign through righteousness" (Rom 5:21), making merciful provision for both the maintaining and meeting of the same. That fundamental principle was here plainly and blessedly exemplified. Jehovah had dealt and would continue to deal in sovereign benignity with the favoured descendants of Abraham, yet at the same time upholding the rights of His throne. God's writing the Law on tables of stone *a second time* is full of meaning for us.

Let us quote from a piece by one who is the very last to be regarded as a "legalist," namely *The Law and a Christian*, by John Bunyan (1620-1677). "The Law was given twice upon mount Sinai, but the appearance of the LORD when He gave it the second time was wonderfully different from that of His when at first He delivered it to Israel. 1. When He gave it the first time, He caused His terror and severity to appear before Moses, to the shaking of his soul, and the dismaying of Israel. But when He gave it the second time, He caused all His goodness to pass before Moses to the comfort of his conscience and the bowing of his heart. 2. When He gave it the first time, it was with thunderings and lightnings, with blackness and darkness, with flame and smoke, and a tearing sound of the trumpet. But when He gave it the second time, it was with a proclamation of His name to be merciful, gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgressions, and sins. 3. When He gave it the first time, Moses was called to go up to receive it through the fire, which made him exceedingly to fear and quake. But when he went to receive it the second time, he was laid in a cleft of a rock.

"From all which I gather that, though as to the *matter* of the Law, both as to its being given the first time and the second, it binds the unbeliever under the pains of eternal damnation (if he close not with Christ by faith); yet as to the *manner* of its giving at these two times, I think the first doth more principally intend its force as a covenant of works, not at all respecting the Lord Jesus; but this second time not (at least in the manner of its being given) respecting such a covenant, but rather as a *rule or directory* to those who already are found in the cleft of the rock, Christ; for the saint himself, though he be without law to God as it is considered the first or old covenant, yet even he is not without law to Him as considered under grace, nor without law to God, but under the law to Christ (1Co 9:21)...The Christian hath now nothing to do with the Law as it thundereth and burneth on Sinai, or as it blindeth the conscience to wrath and the displeasure of God for sin, for from its thus appearing, it is freed by faith in Christ. Yet it *is* to have regard thereto, and is to count it holy, just, and good, which, that it may do, it is always when it seeth or regardeth it, to remember that He who giveth it to us is merciful, gracious, longsuffering..."

In full accord with what the Spirit-taught author of *Pilgrim's Progress* mentioned, yea confirmatory thereof, it may also be pointed out that the first "tables of stone" were provided by Jehovah Himself—"I will give thee" (Exo 24:12)—whereas the second ones were to be supplied by Moses—"hew *thee*" (Exo 34:1)—typical of the Mediator who declared: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Mat 5:17); and in the verses that followed, He enforced the strictness and spirituality of its precepts. Finally, let it be carefully noted that the second set of tables were deposited for safe custody in the ark (Deu 10:5)—a figure of Him who said: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psa 40:8). What anointed eye can fail to see, in the whole of what has here been set before the reader in connection with the twofold giving of the Law at Sinai to God's people—a striking adumbration of His giving it to His elect first *in Adam*, which Law they break; and second, the Law being given to them *in Christ*, who now faithfully and righteously administers it as the gracious and merciful Mediator, according to the terms of Psalm 89:30-34?

The breaking of the first tables by Moses was an expressive emblem of that moral breach which the sins of the people had made between them and God. That breach had been healed, and the covenant re-

established; but before the fundamental words of the covenant were written by Jehovah on the second tables of stone, He gave to Moses—and through him, to the people—a further revelation of His name, that the broken relationship might be renewed under still clearer apprehensions of the benign character of the One with whom they had to do, and unto whom they were required to yield the submission of gratitude and love. “And the LORD passed by before him, and proclaimed, The LORD, The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, Keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty” (Exo 34:6-7). To proclaim His “Name” was for the LORD to make *Himself* more fully known, to disclose His wondrous perfections: as in “And thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Mat 1:21). The “name” Jesus revealed who and what He was and is—the divine Saviour. So “the Name” in which believers are baptized (Mat 28:19) publishes and attests the triune God. Thus here this proclamation of Jehovah’s “name” was a spelling out of *His glorious attributes*.

Before taking up the details of that sevenfold revelation of God’s Name, let us point out first that the LORD Himself was the publisher of this good news. Second, that this Gospel revelation was made by Him in His character of “The LORD, The LORD God” (Exo 34:6), or the *unchanging One*, which looks back to and then amplifies what He had said in Exodus 3:14-15. Third, that this proclamation was given *after* the nation had been guilty of the terrible sin of high treason, but restored to God’s favour through the intervention and intercession of the typical mediator. Oh, “the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering” (Rom 2:4)! “And Moses made haste, and bowed his head toward the earth, and worshipped” (Exo 34:8): well he might at such a discovery of the divine magnanimity. Fourth, that this grand exposition of the divine Name became henceforth the ground of Israel’s confidence and their refuge in the darkest hours of their history. Well did T. Goodwin declare: “This proclamation of grace, being a *magna charta* of the Old Testament, was so highly valued by the prophets and saints of those times, that ever after it had been proclaimed to Moses, they had, throughout all ages, free recourse thereto.”

“And the LORD...proclaimed, The JEHOVAH, the JEHOVAH El”: that is, The Immutable, the Immutable Mighty One. First, “merciful.” How unspeakably blessed it is to observe that *this* is placed in the fore! It is, we might say, the fountain from which the others flow: because God is merciful, He is “gracious, longsuffering,” etc. *Mercy* was the hope of David when he had sinned so grievously: “According unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions” (Psa 51:1). Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go before the army and to say, “Praise the LORD; for his mercy endureth for ever” (2Ch 20:21). Hezekiah reminded Israel in his day, “The LORD your God is gracious and merciful, and will not turn away his face from you, if ye return unto him” (2Ch 30:9). Nehemiah, at a still later date, when supplicating God, made mention of His “ manifold mercies” (Neh 9:19, 27). Even in the dark days of Jeremiah, that prophet was bidden to proclaim these words, “Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the LORD; and I will not cause mine anger to fall upon you: for I am *merciful*, saith the LORD” (Jer 3:12). A captive in Babylon, Daniel acknowledged, “To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him” (Dan 9:9).

Second, “and gracious.” This tells us *the ground* on which God bestows His mercy: it is not for anything in man or from man, but solely of His own benignity. All of God’s mercies are gifts to those who are entirely devoid of merit, and therefore, each must say with Jacob of old: “I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies, and of all the truth, which thou hast shewed unto thy servant” (Gen 32:10). Many are the appeals to the *grace* of God recorded in the Old Testament. David cried, “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious” (Psa 86:15a). Isaiah assured the people of his day: “And therefore will the LORD wait, that he may be gracious unto you” (Isa 30:18). When Joel called upon his generation to “rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God,” he used the inducement, “for he is *gracious*” (Joe 2:13). While in the last book of the Old Testament, the prophet bade the people to “beseech God that he will be gracious unto us” (Mal 1:9).

Third, “longsuffering.” How strikingly did the whole history of Israel furnish witness to the wondrous patience of God! The word for longsuffering here means “slow to anger.” It was to this divine perfection that Moses first appealed when the nation had sinned so terribly at Kadesh-Barnea (Num 14:18). It was the realization of God’s great forbearance which stayed David’s heart (Psa 145:8). When reviewing Israel’s history and God’s patience with them, Nehemiah said: “But thou art a God ready to pardon, gracious and merciful, *slow to anger*” (Neh 9:17). In Nahum’s brief but powerful message, we read, “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in power” (Nah 1:3). The Lord Jesus pointed to this same perfection when He said to the

Jews, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, *how often* would I have gathered thy children together!" (Mat 23:37).

Fourth, "abundant in goodness." The Hebrew word is generally rendered "kindness." David acknowledged this attribute of the divine character when he said, "Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvellous kindness in a strong city" (Psa 31:21). The Hebrew word is also rendered "lovingkindness," frequent mention of the same being made in the Psalms. "For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes" (Psa 26:3). "How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God!" (Psa 36:7). "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple" (Psa 48:9). Isaiah declared: "I will mention the lovingkindnesses of the LORD" (Isa 63:7). Through Jeremiah, God said: "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD" (Jer 9:24). Let dispensationalists take note that the "lovingkindness" of God is mentioned far more frequently under the Mosaic economy than it is in the New Testament!

Fifth, "and truth." The Hebrew word signifies "steadfastness." "All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth" (Psa 25:10). "His truth shall be thy shield and buckler" (Psa 91:4). "For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds" (Psa 108:4). "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it" (Psa 132:11). In Psalm 111:7, the word is rendered, "The works of his hands are *verity* and judgment"; and in Nehemiah 7:2, it is translated "faithful." God is faithful to His covenant engagements and true to both His promises and His threatenings. How highly should we value this divine perfection: that our God "cannot lie" (Ti 1:2)!

Sixth, "keeping mercy for thousands, *forgiving* iniquity and transgression and sin" (Exo 34:7). How often God pardoned Israel's sins! "For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. *But he*, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, *many a time* turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath" (Psa 78:37-38). How different is the God of Judaism from the dispensationalists' perverted portrayal of Him! "Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption" (Psa 130:7). That was spoken to the nation which was under the Sinaitic covenant! "I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins" (Isa 43:25). "Who is a God like unto thee, that pardoneth iniquity, and passeth by the transgression of the remnant of his heritage? he retaineth not his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy" (Mic 7:18). Such, my reader, is the God of the Old Testament. Such was the blessed discovery which He made of Himself unto His people at *Sinai*.

Seventh, "and that will by no means clear the guilty." Carnal reason will deem this a contradiction: for God to announce that He will pardon sin, and yet in the same breath declare He will not acquit the guilty—for what is pardon but an acquittal of those who are guilty? But there is no contradiction here: the guilty whom God pardoneth are penitent and believing sinners (Isa 55:7; Act 3:19); the ones He acquits not are the finally impenitent, who are found under guilt in the day of judgment (Psa 9:17; Rev 21:8). Let it not be forgotten that as the Law threatens death to the impenitent transgressor, so the Gospel proclaims damnation unto those who comply not with its terms (Mar 16:16). The Saviour presented both sides of the truth when He declared: "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him" (Joh 3:36). Thus the God of the Old and the New Testaments is one and the same, and deals with men in precisely the same way!

It should be carefully noted that punitive justice is a branch of the divine "goodness" and was proclaimed here under that very notion, for when Moses had prayed so earnestly, "Shew me thy glory," the LORD responded, "I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee" (Exo 33:18-19); and here in Exodus 34:6-7, He expounded the fullness of His glorious name. Thus, not only is justice an essential part of God's character, but it is here included under the general notion of His *goodness*! Yet it must not be overlooked that God here spoke far more of His mercy than He did of His justice, and that it was mentioned before the other: "For justice is only added to invite men to take hold of His mercy, and to show that justice is never executed but in avenging the quarrel of abused mercy"—T. Manton. Mercy is what God delights in and judgment is His "strange work" (Isa 28:21); nevertheless, He here warns men not to presume upon His clemency—yea, declares that the hopes of those who do will certainly be dashed. In like manner, *in the Gospel* are revealed both the righteousness and the "wrath of God" (Rom 1:16-18).

“This emphatic proclamation of the divine name, or description of the character in which God wished to be known by His people, is in principle the same as that which heads the Ten Words: but it is of greater compass, and remarkable chiefly for the copious and prominent exhibition it gives of the gracious, tender, and benignant character of God as the Redeemer of Israel, that they might know how thoroughly they could trust in His goodness, and what ample encouragement they had to serve Him. It intimates indeed that obstinate transgressors should meet their desert, but gives this only the subordinate and secondary place, while *grace* occupies the foreground. Was this, we ask, to act like one who was more anxious to inspire terror than win affection from men? Did it seem as if He would have His revelation of Law associated in their minds with the demands of a rigid service, such as only an imperious sense of duty or a dread of consequences might constrain them to render? Assuredly not, and we know that the words of the Memorial Name, which He so closely linked with the restored tables of the Law, did take an abiding hold of the more earnest and thoughtful spirits of the nation, and ever and anon, amid the seasons of greater darkness and despondency, came up with a joyous and reassuring effect into their hearts (Psa 103:8; Joe 2:13; Jon 4:2, etc.)”—Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874).

It was this glorious discovery of His benign character, which Jehovah made to Israel at the giving of the Law, that made David to exclaim: “But thou, O Lord, art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long-suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth” (Psa 86:15). Abundant proof had He given of the same during the time which had elapsed since the days of Moses. Read through the book of Judges and mark how often, after the LORD had righteously chastened Israel for their grievous backslidings, it is recorded that “when the children of Israel cried unto the LORD, the LORD raised up a deliverer” (Jdg 3:9, 15; 6:7, etc.)! It was on the basis of the same that Samuel urged Israel to walk worthily of such a God: “Only fear the LORD, and serve him in truth with all your heart: *for* consider how great things he hath done for you” (1Sa 12:24)—there is no more *evangelical motive* than that employed in the New Testament when exhorting the saints to the performance of duty. So far from being under a harsh regime, they were taught “but he *giveth grace* unto the lowly” (Pro 3:34). It only remains for us now to add that, inasmuch as He “changeth not” (Psa 15:4), the same seven perfections of the divine character which we have contemplated above are exercised by God in His government of Christendom corporately, and of the Christian individually. With the Father of lights, there is “*no variableness, neither shadow of turning*” (Jam 1:17); and therefore, no change of dispensation can possibly effect any change in the manner in which He deals with His people.

