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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

DRIVEN

“Therefore the LORD God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken. So he *drove* out the man: and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life” (Gen 3:23-24). Adam had forfeited the favour of his Maker, having revolted from His government and become an enemy to Him by wicked works. He was alienated from God, unfit for His presence under His wrath. As such, he was no longer capable of enjoying Eden, and therefore, the Lord “sent him forth,” that is, ordered him to depart. But he was not willing to leave, and gave further proof of his waywardness by refusing to comply. But the Lord would not be mocked, and drove him out. He was forcibly expelled from paradise, and his return thither effectually barred. Thus, he became an outcast from God, cut off from His fellowship, banished from the place of delight, sent forth a fugitive into the world. That divine act (the last recorded one of God’s in connection with Adam) signified that he was now at a guilty distance from Him, hateful to Him. It was the *visible* proof that the sentence of Genesis 2:17 had been executed, for spiritual death is the severance of the soul from God (Isa 59:2; Luk 15:24). Thus was God’s holy displeasure manifested, while the presence of the cherubims and the flaming sword intimated that the angels were at war with him, and the way of the tree of life shut up. He had committed the unpardonable sin!

“And when the fowls came down upon the carcasses, Abram *drove them away*” (Gen 15:11). What a striking contrast with the above! A blessed promise had been made to Abram, and he had believed the same (Gen 15:4-6). A further promise was given, and he desired an external token as an assurance thereof to confirm his faith. Accordingly, he was bidden to prepare a sacrifice so that a solemn compact could be made between them. Having slain the victims according to divine instructions and laid them out in due order,

Abram awaited the Lord's appearing over those sacrifices to ratify the covenant. Meanwhile, buzzards and vultures scented the bodies and came to devour the flesh. The patriarch was on the alert and chased the birds away, so that the sacrifices should not be marred. A threefold application, at least, may be legitimately made of this incident.

First, it teaches us that faith will be tried while we await the fulfilment of the Lord's promise. Abram had obediently complied with the Lord's orders, and now that he looked to Him to make good His word, opposition was unexpectedly encountered. But he refused to be daunted and resisted those winged enemies. Then, we should be prepared for such testings, and "Let patience have her perfect work" (Jam 1:4). Second, it pictures faith repelling all attacks made upon the atoning sacrifice of Christ. We need to be very much on our guard at this point, for Satan is very active through his teachers of error, seeking to rob believers of some important aspect of the redemptive work of the Saviour. Only the energy of faith can expel the objections of skepticism. Third, it shows how diligently we need to watch against all intrusions on our devotions, especially those vain and wandering thoughts which are so apt upon the most sacred occasions to arise and interrupt the exercise of our graces. "A watchful eye needs to be kept on our spiritual sacrifices, that nothing be suffered to prey upon them and render them unfit for God's acceptance" (Matthew Henry, 1662-1714). Adopt not the defeatist attitude and say, "Wandering thoughts are inevitable. I cannot prevent them," for it is written, "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (Jam 4:7). "Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom 12:21)—by the exercise of faith and perseverance in prayer.

"Now the priest of Midian had seven daughters: and they came and drew water, and filled the troughs to water their father's flock. And the shepherds came and *drove them away*: but Moses stood up and helped them, and watered their flock" (Exo 2:16-17). In hot and dry countries, because of the great scarcity of water, wells are highly valued, and, being more or less public property, are often the occasion of contention (cf. Gen 21:25; 26:15, 20). In this present instance, we may perceive the wondrous workings of Providence—as appears plainly in the sequel. At that time, Moses was a fugitive from Pharaoh, a stranger in a foreign country, resting at the well. As he witnessed the shepherds' treatment of those women, he might have selfishly reasoned, "This is none of my affair, I will not meddle with their business. Why should I embroil myself in their quarrel?" No, Moses was not one of that class who think only of themselves. Though in personal distress, he forgot his own troubles, and as a lover of justice and a defender of the weak (Exo 2:12-13), he boldly took the part of the wronged ones. He was well repaid for his kindness. The Lord was with him, and single-handed he drove the shepherds away. He was thereby given favour in the eyes of the women's father, and a door was providentially opened which gave him a shelter, a home, and a wife in a strange land. Thus did all things work together for good. We are never the losers by assisting the helpless and vindicating the oppressed.

"The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness: but the righteous hath hope in his death" (Pro 14:32). How unspeakably solemn is the contrast here presented! "It is appointed unto men once to die" (Heb 9:27), but with what vastly different designs does God commission death unto one and to another! To some, death comes as a messenger of mercy, conducting the soul to everlasting peace and joy, but to the majority, it is an officer of justice, summoning to eternal torment and woe. Thus, this verse presents an aspect of

death which has little place in the minds of men. It lifts a corner of the veil and permits us to perceive what very few realize—the power of God put forth in ridding the earth of its cumberers. The wicked, in their mad career, are forcibly removed, for they do not leave it willingly. They cling tenaciously to this life, dreading the one to come. But there is no resisting the divine summons, “This night thy soul shall be required of thee” (Luk 12:20). The soul is forced out of the body, driven away from godless friends, earthly possessions, and carnal joys. He is torn away from his only heaven here with all his unrepentant guilt, unprepared to meet his Judge, a vessel of wrath fitted to destruction. “They are as stubble before the wind, and as chaff that the storm carrieth away” (Job 21:18).

“The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was *driven from men*, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles’ feathers, and his nails like birds’ claws” (Dan 4:33). “Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall” (Pro 16:18). Most forcibly is that illustrated in the book of Daniel in connection with the king of Babylon. Providence had raised him to a dizzy height (Dan 4:22), and such exaltation had completely turned his head. How few remain humble when prosperity attends their ways! Divine warning had been given the king, space granted for repentance (Dan 4:23, 25), but he improved it not. For a year later, as he walked in the palace, he said, “Is not this great Babylon, that I have built for the house of the kingdom by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?” (Dan 4:30). While he was thus boasting, the divine threat was executed, and the monarch was driven from the abodes of men into the haunts of the beasts (Dan 4:31-33). But the divine chastisement was blessed to him and his sanity was restored (Dan 4:34-37). But his successor took not the warning to heart and was destroyed (Dan 5:17-30).

“And was *driven of the devil* into the wilderness” (Luk 8:29). One reason why Christ’s miracles of healing are given so prominent a place in the Gospels, and the condition of sufferers is so minutely described, is that they portray His work of salvation in the soul. By nature, *we* are spiritually deaf, dumb, blind, palsied, leprous, dead in sin. The poor demoniac of Mark 5 and Luke 8 also supplies a lurid picture of the unregenerate—under the power of the enemy in its fiercest display, depicting the terrible hold it has on its victims. This one had his dwelling among the tombs—the place of death and corruption. None could bind him—he was lawless and intractable, shattering bonds both human and divine, breaking asunder every restraint which wisdom devises. He was untamable—neither education nor expostulation could change his nature. He was devil-driven. Those who are under the government of Christ are drawn and led—those under the devil are furiously impelled—“The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest” (Isa 57:20). He was day and night “cutting himself with stones” (Mar 5:5)—what a spectacle of utter misery! Yet Christ delivered him!

“And when he had made a scourge of small cords, *he drove them all out* of the temple” (Joh 2:15). Christ came here on an errand of pure grace, and therefore almost all His miracles were benign in their character. Yet, to show that He is also the Judge, occasional gleams of justice flashed forth from Him, as in the cursing of the barren fig tree and the destruction of the herd of swine. Generally it was the gentleness of the lamb which marked His conduct, but at times, the majesty of the lion was displayed, as in John 2:16 and 18:6.

There He manifested His great displeasure at seeing the sacred place so shamefully profaned, and vindicated the honour of His Father.

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

1. In Salvation

In the nineteenth chapter of Acts, we learn that when the apostle Paul came to Ephesus, he asked some disciples of John the Baptist, "Have ye received the Holy Spirit since ye believed?" (Act 19:2). And we are told, "They said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Spirit." Sad to say, history has repeated itself. Without doubt, were the members of hundreds of so-called "churches" (in which modernism and worldliness rule) asked this same question, they would be obliged to return the identical answer. The reason why those disciples at Ephesus knew not about the Holy Spirit was, most probably, because they had been baptized in Judaea by the forerunner of Christ and then had returned to Ephesus in ignorance of what had taken place on the day of Pentecost. But the reason why the members of the average "church" today know nothing about the third Person of the Godhead is that the preachers they sit under are silent concerning Him.

Nor is it very much better with many of the churches still counted as orthodox. Though the Person of the Spirit may not be repudiated, and though His *name* may occasionally be mentioned, yet only on rare occasions is there any definite scriptural teaching given out concerning the offices and operations of the divine Comforter. In the majority of places where the Lord Jesus is still formally acknowledged to be the only Saviour for sinners, the current teaching of the day is that Christ made it possible for me to be saved. As to the Holy Spirit's work *in salvation*, this is very little understood even by professing Christians. The idea now so widely prevailing is that Christ is offered to man's acceptance, and that *he* must "surrender," "Give his heart to Jesus," "Take his stand for Christ," etc., if the blood of the cross is to avail for his sins. Thus, according to this conception, the finished work of Christ, the greatest work of all time, in all the universe, is left contingent on the fickle will of man as to whether it shall be a success or a failure.

Entering now a much narrower circle in Christendom, in places where it is yet owned that the Holy Spirit has a mission and ministry in connection with the preaching of the Gospel, the general idea that prevails even there is that, when the Gospel of Christ is faithfully preached, the Holy Spirit convicts men of sin and reveals to them their need of a Saviour. But beyond this, very few indeed are prepared to go. The theory prevailing in these places is that the sinner has to *co-operate* with the Spirit, that he must *yield to* the Spirit's "striving" or he will not and cannot be saved. But this pernicious and God-insulting theory denies two things. To argue that the natural man is capable of co-operating with the Spirit is to deny that he is "*dead* in trespasses and sins," for a dead man is incapable of doing anything. And to say that the operations of the Spirit in a man's heart and conscience may be resisted and withstood is to deny His omnipotence.

Ere proceeding farther, and in order to clear the way for what is to follow, a few words need to be said on, “My spirit shall not always strive with man” (Gen 6:3), and “Ye do always resist the Holy Spirit: as your fathers did, so do ye” (Act 7:51). Now these passages refer to the *external* word of the Spirit—that is to His testimony through the preached Word. 1 Peter 3:18-20 shows that it was the Spirit of Christ *in Noah* who “strove” with the antediluvians, as the patriarch preached to them (2Pe 2:5). So in Acts 7:52, the very next words explain verse 51—“Which of the *prophets* have not your fathers persecuted?” As Nehemiah said, “Many years didst thou forbear them, and testifiedst against them by thy spirit *in thy prophets*” (Neh 9:30).

The external work of the Spirit, His testimony through the Scriptures as it falls upon the outward ear of the natural man, is *always* “resisted” and rejected, which only affords solemn and full demonstration of the awful fact that the “carnal mind is enmity against God” (Rom 8:7). But what we would now point out is that Scripture reveals another work of the Holy Spirit, a work that is internal, imperceptible, invisible. This work is always *efficacious*. *It is the Spirit’s work in salvation*, begun in the heart at the new birth, continued or sustained throughout the whole course of the Christian’s life on earth, and concluded and consummated in heaven. This is what is referred to in Philippians 1:6, “He which hath begun a good work in you will finish it.” This is what is in view in Psalm 138:8, “The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me.” This work is wrought by the Spirit in each of God’s elect and in them alone.

It has been said that, “The part or office of the Holy Spirit in salvation of God’s elect consists in *renewing them*. He quickens the heirs of glory with a spiritual life, enlightens their minds to know Christ, reveals Him to them, forms Him in their hearts, and brings them to build all their hopes of eternal glory on Him alone. He sheds abroad the Father’s love in their hearts, and gives them a real sense of it. In which experience of His gracious and effectual work in their souls, they are made to say with the Psalmist, ‘Blessed is the man whom thou choosest, and causeth to approach unto thee, that he may dwell in thy courts’ (Psa 65:4).”—S. E. Pierce (1746-1829).

One of the delusions of the day is that an evangelical-believing in Christ lies within the power of the unrenewed man, so that by performing what is naively called, “a simple act of faith,” he becomes a renewed man. In other words, it is supposed that man is the beginner of his own salvation. *He* takes the first step, and God does the rest. *He* “believes,” and then God comes in and saves him. This is nothing but a bald and blank denial of the Spirit’s work altogether. If there is one time more than another when the sinner lies in need of the Spirit’s power, it is *at the beginning*. “He who denies the need of the Spirit at the *beginning*, cannot believe in His work at the after stages—nay, cannot believe in the need of the Spirit’s work at all. The mightiest and most insuperable difficulty lies at the beginning. If the sinner can get over *that* without the Spirit, he can easily get over the rest. If he does not need the Spirit to enable him to believe, he will not need him to enable him to love” (Horatius Bonar, 1808-1889).

They err greatly who think that, *after* the Spirit has done His work in the conscience, it still remains for man to say whether he shall be regenerated or not, whether he shall believe or not. The Spirit of God does not wait for the sinner to exercise his will *to* believe, instead He works in the elect, “*both to will and to do*” (Phi 2:13). Therefore does

JEHOVAH declare, "I am found of them that sought me *not*" (Isa 65:1)—quoted by Paul in Romans 10:20. To "believe" in Christ savingly is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural grace. There is no more power in fallen man to believe to the saving of his soul than he has any merits of his own entitling him to the favour of God. Thus, he is dependent on the Spirit for power as on Christ for worthiness. The Spirit's work is to *apply* the redemption which the Lord Jesus purchased for His people, and the children of God owe their salvation to the One as much as to the Other.

In Titus 3:5, the *salvation* of the redeemed is expressly attributed to God the Spirit, "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, *by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit.*" "If it be asked in what sense men can be said to be 'saved' by the renewing of the Spirit, when the salvation is in Christ, the answer is obvious. There is a series of truths to which no link can be wanting. We are saved by the divine purpose, for God hath chosen us to salvation. We are saved by the atonement, as the meritorious ground of all. We are saved by faith as the bond of union to Christ. We are saved by grace as contrasted with works done. We are saved by the truth. We are saved by the renewing of the Holy Spirit, as producing faith in the heart" (Professor George Smeaton, 1814-1889).

I. Regeneration is by the Spirit

"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins" (Eph 2:1). The quickening of those who are dead in trespasses is the work of the third Person of the Trinity, "That which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (Joh 3:6). The natural man is spiritually dead. He is alive sinward and worldward, but dead Godward—"alienated from the life of God" (Eph 4:18). If this solemn truth were really believed, there would be an end of controversy on our present subject. A dead man *cannot* "co-operate" with the Spirit, nor can he "accept Christ." In 11 Corinthians 3:5, we read, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything." That is said of Christians. If the regenerate have no capacity to "think" spiritually, still less are the unregenerate able to.

"The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned" (1Co 2:14). What could be plainer? The "natural man" is fallen in his *unregenerate* state. Unless he be born from above, he is completely devoid of spiritual discernment. Our Lord expressly declared, "Except a man be born again, he *cannot see* the kingdom of God" (Joh 3:3). The "natural man" cannot see himself, his ruin, his depravity, the filthiness of his own righteousness. No matter how plainly God's truth be presented to him, being blind, he cannot discern either meaning, its spirituality, or its suitedness to his need. A spiritual understanding of the Gospel is as truly due to the operation of the Holy Spirit as that He is the Author of divine revelation. Spiritual life must precede spiritual sight, and the Spirit Himself must enter the heart before there is life, "And shall put my spirit in you, and ye shall live" (Eze 37:14).

The work of the Spirit in regeneration is a divine miracle which is the result of His forthputting of supernatural power. It is the quickening of a spiritual corpse. It is the

bringing of a dead soul to life. The sinner himself can no more accomplish it by an act of his own will than he can create a universe. This miracle of grace is spoken of in Scripture as, "The exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead" (Eph 1:19-20). "The same power which was put forth to raise Christ from the dead, is put forth in regeneration....Christ's resurrection is the exemplary pattern of our spiritual resurrection, according to which, as the Spirit wrought in Him, so He works in us a work conformed to His resurrection. As the resurrection of Christ was the great declaration of His being the Son of God, so is regeneration of our being sons of God, being the evidence of our adoption, and also the first discovery of our election. As Christ's resurrection is the first step to His eternal glory, so regeneration is the first open introduction into all the blessings of that state of grace into which the child of God is now introduced" (S. E. Pierce).

II. Meetness for Heaven is by the Spirit

Our *title* to the glory lies in the righteousness of Christ. Our personal *fitness* for it lies in the Holy Spirit's regeneration of us. Writing to the regenerated at Colosse, the apostle said, "Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light" (Col 1:12). And then he shows *wherein* this *meetness* consists, "Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son" (Col 1:13). Their title is without them, their "meetness" within. The Holy Spirit has created in them a nature which is capacitated to know and enjoy the Triune God.

In our unregenerate state, we were completely under the power of darkness, that is, of sin and Satan, and we were less able to deliver ourselves from this bondage than Jonah was able to escape from the belly of the whale. We "sat in darkness" and "in the region and shadow of death" (Mat 4:16). We were "captives," "bound," and "in prison" (Isa 61:1). We were those "having *no* hope, and without God in the world" (Eph 2:12). From this dreadful state, every renewed soul has been "delivered" by the gracious, sovereign, invincible power of the Holy Spirit, and has been "translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son." Then, let each renewed reader give equal homage, adoration, worship to Him, as to the Father and the Son.

III. Justification and Sanctification are by the Spirit

"And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and *by the Spirit* of our God" (1Co 6:11). This is a remarkable Scripture and little pondered. It would lead us too far away from our present theme were we to attempt a full exposition of it. Two things only would we barely point out. The three saving blessings enumerated in this verse are referred, first, to the "name" or merits of Christ as the procuring cause, and then, to the Holy Spirit, who makes the elect partakers of them, by His own effectual application. He it is who enlightens their minds

and opens their hearts to take in and be assured that they *are* “washed, sanctified and justified.”

IV. Faith is from the Spirit

A deeply taught servant of God once wrote to a young preacher, “Never represent faith as being an act so ‘simple’ that the work of the Spirit is not needed to produce it.” Yet this is what has been commonly done. A great many of the evangelists of the past hundred years have displayed a zeal which was not according to knowledge (Rom 10:2), and manifested a far greater concern to see souls saved than to preach the truth of God in its purity. In their efforts to show the *simplicity* of the “way of salvation,” they have lost sight of the *difficulties* of salvation (Luk 18:24; 1Pe 4:18). In their pressing of the responsibility of man to believe, they have ignored the fact that none can believe till the Spirit imparts faith. To present Christ to the sinner, and then throw him back on his own will, is to mock his helplessness. The work of the Spirit in the heart is as real and urgent a need as was the work of Christ on the cross. For the heart truly to believe in and trust God is a *spiritual* act, a good fruit,” and if fallen man possesses inherent power to do good, then to present the atonement to him is altogether needless.

There is no middle ground between death and life, no intermediate stage between conversion and non-conversion. The bestowal of eternal life is instantaneous. We are “*created* in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:10). It is a most serious error to suppose that after the Spirit of God has done His work in the sinner, it still remains for him to say whether he shall believe or not. All who are the recipients of His supernatural operations *are* regenerated, effectually converted, and actually believe. It is not that the Spirit imparts capacity to believe and then waits for the individual to exercise his will to believe. No, He works in the “both to will *and* to do” (Phi 2:13). I may tell a man that in the next room there is a lighted lamp, and he may not believe me. But let me bring it into the room where he is, so that he sees the light for himself, and he is irresistibly persuaded. So a servant of God may tell a man that Christ is sufficient for the chief of sinners, and he believes not. But when Christ is “revealed *in* him” (Gal 1:16), he cannot but trust Him—see 11 Corinthians 4:6.

How perversely men *reverse* the order of God’s truth. They urge dead sinners to come to Christ, supposing they have power of will to do so, whereas Christ has plainly and emphatically stated that, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him” (Joh 6:44). “Coming to Christ” is the affections of the heart being drawn out towards Him, and how can one love a person he *knows not?* (see Joh 4:10). Ah, it is the Spirit who must bring Christ to me, reveal Him in me, before I can truly know Him. “Coming to Christ” is an *inward* and *spiritual* act, not an outward and natural one. Truly, “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1Co 2:14). We cannot so much as “see” Christ until we are born again (Joh 3:3).

Saving grace is something more than an objective fact presented to us. It is a subjective operation wrought within us. As it is not by *natural* discernment that I discover my need of

Christ, so it is not by my natural strength and will that I “come” to Him. There must be life and light (sight) before there can be motion. A babe has to be born, and have strength and sight too, before it is able to “come” to its parent. Believing in Christ is a supernatural act, the product of supernatural power. One may, by means of grammatical phrases and spiritual propositions, teach spiritual truth to another, but he cannot illumine his mind with respect thereto. He may tell a man that God is holy, but he cannot impart to him a *consciousness* that God is holy. He may tell him that sin is infinitely heinous, but he cannot beget in him a *feeling* or heart realization that it is so. To those who were well acquainted with him outwardly, Christ said, “Ye neither know me nor my Father” (Joh 8:19). A man may “know the way of righteousness” (2Pe 2:21) theoretically, intellectually, but that is a vastly different matter (though very few are inwardly aware of it) from a spiritual and experimental acquaintance with it.

“We having the same spirit of faith, according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken; we also believe, and therefore speak” (2Co 4:13). Here the Spirit of God is spoken of according to the work which He performs. “The title ‘*Spirit of faith*’ intimates that the Holy Spirit is the Author of faith, for all men have not faith. That is, it is not given to all and does not belong to all (2Th 3:2). The designation means that the procuring cause of faith is the Holy Spirit, who produces this effect by an invincible call, an invitation which accompanies, according to the good pleasure of His will, the external proclamation of the Gospel. The faith, therefore, of which He is the Author, is not effected by the hearer’s own effectual will....The special operation of the Spirit inclines the sinner previously disinclined, to receive the invitation of the Gospel. For it is He alone, acting as the Spirit of faith, that removes the enmity of the carnal mind to those doctrines of the cross which, but for this, would seem to him unnecessary, or foolish and offensive” (Professor George Smeaton).

Writing to the Philippian saints, the apostle declared, “Unto you it is *given*...to believe on him” (Phi 1:29). Faith is God’s “gift,” as Ephesians 2:8-9 positively affirms. It is not a gift *offered* for man’s acceptance, but actually conferred upon God’s children, breathed into them. It is imparted to each of God’s elect, at His appointed time, by the Holy Spirit. It is not produced by the creature’s will, but is of the “faith of *the operation* of God” (Col 2:12). We read of “the *work* of God’s children, breathed into them.” It is the “work” of the Spirit, by His supernatural action. The Holy Spirit is given by Christ to this end, that each of those for whom He died should be brought to a saving knowledge of the truth. Therefore, we are told, “Who by him [not by our wills] do believe in God” (1Pe 1:21). In 1 Corinthians 3:5, it is said, “By whom ye believed, even as the *Lord* gave to every man.” So in Ephesians 6:23, it is declared, “Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith, *from* God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” The very degree and strength of our faith is determined solely by God. “Think soberly, according as God hath dealt to every man the *measure* of faith” (Rom 12:3). If by grace, you are truly a “believer,” let the reader give God the Spirit honour, glory, and praise for it.

V. Salvation is wholly applied by the Spirit

“We are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation *through sanctification of the Spirit* and belief of the truth” (2Th 2:13). The mission of the Spirit in the earth is to apply to God’s elect the redemption purposed by the Father and purchased by the Son for them. The Holy Spirit is here to make good in the souls of the heirs of glory the fruits of the travail of Christ’s soul. This He does by means of the Gospel, by the written and oral ministry of the Scriptures, for the Word of God is the *only* instrument He employs or uses. The Word of God is “the word of life” (Phi 2:16), but it only becomes such in the experience of the individual soul by the immediate operation and application of the Spirit of God. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonian saints, “For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Spirit” (1Th 1:5). This is not to deny the efficacy of the Word itself, but is to insist that the direct agency of the Spirit on the heart is absolutely necessary in order to the *reception* of the Word. The Word is a lamp unto our path, but there must be an opening of the eyes of our understanding by the Spirit before we can *see* its light.

The salvation of God’s elect was purposed, planned, and provided by God the Father before the foundation of the world. It was procured and secured by the incarnation, obedience, death, and resurrection of God the Son. It is made known, applied to, and wrought in them by God the Spirit. Thus, “Salvation is of the LORD” (Jon 2:9), and man has no part in it at any point whatsoever. The child of God is not the earner, but the recipient of it. Faith is not the condition which the elect sinner must perform in order to obtain salvation, but is the means and channel through which he personally *enjoys* the salvation of the Triune JEHOVAH.

THE EVERLASTING COVENANT

Part 1

Dr. Hugh Martin (1821-1885) began his invaluable work on the atonement by saying, “If we would investigate the very doctrines of atonement which God’s Word sets forth—avoiding arbitrary and capricious speculations, and illegitimate and useless trains of thought—it must be laid down at the outset, as a proposition of transcendent importance, that the doctrine of the atonement ought to be discussed and defended as inside the doctrine of the Covenant of Grace.” Alas that so many have failed to do so, with the result that the foundations of faith have been undermined, truth has been perverted, the people of God have been perplexed, and the enemies of the Lord afforded every opportunity to attack with no little success an otherwise impregnable fortress.

The satisfaction or atonement of Christ ought never to be separated from its *source*, that source being the eternal agreement entered into by the Persons of the Godhead. That which Christ wrought out in time was what had been determined upon in the timeless counsels of the Holy Trinity. That which was accomplished here in this world was what had been decided upon and ordained in heaven before ever this earth had an existence. Christ did not propose the plan of reconciliation or offer to carry it into execution, instead it was proposed unto Him. The Father drew the plan and proposed it unto Christ as the God-man, the Mediator. He most cheerfully engaged to carry out that plan. The Holy Spirit was a witness unto that great transaction between the Father and the Son, and He recorded it in the eternal volume of the divine decrees, and has accurately and authentically stated it in the Holy Scriptures, in which we read of, “The blood of *the everlasting covenant*” (Heb 13:20).

When writing or thinking of the work of redemption, we ought to ascend to its *source*, and begin with the consideration of that eternal agreement between the Persons of the Godhead on which the whole dispensation of divine grace to the elect is founded. It is failure to recognize or refusal to believe what is revealed in the Scripture of truth concerning the relation of Christ’s mediatorial work to the everlasting covenant which has engendered so many fruitless controversies upon the atonement. Once we are enabled to discern the fact of, the terms of, the immutability of the covenant of grace, then, such questions as the injustice of an innocent person suffering for the guilty, of the certain efficacy or contingent inefficacy of Christ’s sacrifice securing what it was designed to effect, and of the scope or extent of the atonement—whether for all mankind or only the elect of God—are settled once and for all.

That Scripture expressly reveals an organic connection between the covenant of grace and the sacrifice of Christ is plain from the words of Hebrews 13:20, “The blood of the everlasting covenant.” So again in Zechariah 9:11, we find God saying to the Mediator, “By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.” Our blessed Lord Himself, when instituting the memorial supper, said, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” (1Co 11:25). It is the blood which makes an atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11), but it does so because that blood is “the blood of the everlasting covenant.” In Hebrews 8:6, Christ is expressly denominated the “mediator of a better covenant,” and in Hebrews 7:22, “a surety of a better covenant.” Yes, Scripture represents Him as the very *substance* of the covenant. “I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a *covenant* of the people, for a light of the Gentiles” (Isa 42:6).

Now a covenant is an agreement between two parties who are under mutual engagements. Something is to be done by one of the parties, in consequence of which the other party binds himself to do something in return. When a master, for example, enters into an agreement or covenant with a servant, he prescribes certain duties to be performed by the servant, and promises to recompense him with suitable wages. By consenting to the compact, the servant becomes bound to perform the stipulated work, and the master is bound to bestow the reward when the term of labour is finished. In a covenant, therefore, there are two parts, a condition and a promise. When the condition of the covenant is met, the performer is by right entitled to the reward.

In his truly excellent work, *The Satisfaction of Christ* (1650), Dr. John Owen (1616-1683), the prince of the Puritans, when treating of the everlasting covenant, pointed out, "There are five things required to the complete establishing and accomplishing of such a compact and agreement, 1. That there be sundry persons, two at least, namely, a promiser and undertaker, agreeing voluntarily together in counsel and design, for the accomplishment, and to bring about some common end, acceptable to them both, so agreeing together; being both to do somewhat, that they are not otherwise obliged to do; there must be some common end agreed on by them, wherein they are delighted; and if they do not both voluntarily agree to what is on each hand incumbent, it is no covenant or compact, but an imposition of one upon the other. 2. That the person promising who is the principal engager in the covenant, do require something at the hand of the other, to be done or undergone, wherein he is concerned. He is to prescribe something to him, which is the condition, whereon the accomplishment of the end aimed at, is to depend. 3. That he make to him who doth undertake, such promises as are necessary for his supportment and encouragement, and which may fully balance in his judgment, all that is required of him, or prescribed to him. 4. That upon the consideration of the condition and promise, the duty and reward prescribed and engaged for, as formerly mentioned, the undertaker do voluntarily address himself to the one, and expect the accomplishment of the other. 5. That the accomplishment of the condition being pleaded by the undertaker, and approved by the promiser, the common end originally designed, be brought about and established. These five things are required to the entering into, and complete accomplishment of such a covenant, convention, or agreement, as is built on personal performances; and they are all eminently expressed in the Scripture, to be found in the compact between the Father and the Son."

Let us adopt these statements as our divisions:

I. The Agreement between the Father and the Son

God and the Mediator agreed together in counsel for the accomplishment of a common end, namely, the promotion of the manifested glory of God in the salvation of His elect. In Zechariah 6:13, we read, "And the counsel of peace shall be between them both." The reference here is to the Lord JEHOVAH, and the Man, whose name is "the Branch" of the previous verse. The "counsel of peace" signifies the compact or agreement between Them, as to the reconciliation between God and His sinful people. There was a voluntary concern of the Father and the Son for the accomplishment of the work of peace in bringing us to God. It is to this that Isaiah 9:6 also refers. There Christ is called, "Wonderful, Counsellor," as concurring in the design of His Father, and with Him, to be the Child born and the Son given "to us," that He might be the Prince of peace. In that connection, and in that passage (only) is Christ called "the everlasting Father," because His everlasting "children" (Heb 2:13) were being covenanted for. So, too, in Zechariah 13:7, the Mediator is addressed by JEHOVAH as, "My Fellow," because they had taken counsel together about the work of our salvation.

The Mediator's voluntary acceptance of the Father's proposal is clearly seen from His own language in that great Messianic Psalm, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is

written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:7-8). These words express His cheerful compliance with the terms of the covenant, and those terms—God’s “will”—are recorded in the volume of the divine decrees concerning the salvation of God’s elect, and transcribed in the Holy Scriptures.

Therefore is Christ called the “surety of the covenant” (Heb 7:22). A “surety” is a person who gives security for another that he will perform somethings which the other is bound to do. That is, in case of failure, will perform it for him. This work, as given to our Saviour, signifies that He came under obligation to fulfil the conditions of the covenant for His people. He undertook to yield that obedience unto the law which they owed, and to make satisfaction to divine justice for their sins. A surety for a bankrupt is one who engages to satisfy his creditors by paying his debts. Hence, when the Lord Jesus is called the Surety of the new covenant, it denotes that He undertook to discharge the whole debt which His people owed to the Law of God, the debt of obedience, the debt of suffering.

As we have seen above, our Saviour is also called the “mediator” of the covenant. This title imports that He interposes between God and men to reconcile them. “There is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1Ti 2:5). For this office, He is qualified by the constitution of His person. Possessed of the divine nature, He agreed to assume the human, that He might be allied to both parties. Very similar in force to the “Mediator” of the new covenant is Christ’s title of, “the last Adam” (1Co 15:45) and a contrast (Rom 5:18) between him and the first Adam. This designation of our Saviour’s declares that He is a *federal Head*, by whose conduct others are affected.

II. The Work the Father gave the Son to do

There are many expressions used in both Old and New Testaments which, when carefully weighed, oblige us to conclude that there was an eternal transaction between the Father and the Son—the former assigning to the latter a certain task in order to secure the salvation of His elect. First, it was required of the Surety that He should take on Him the nature of those whom He was to bring to God. Therefore do we find him saying, “A body hast thou prepared me” (Heb 10:5)—that is “appointed for me.” Hence it is said, “God sent forth his Son, made of a woman” (Gal 4:4).

Second, it was required of Him that, in this “body,” or human nature, He should be a *servant*, and yield obedience to God. Therefore we hear the Father saying of Him, “Behold, my servant” (Isa 42:1). The Father required from the Mediator perfect obedience to all the precepts of His law. Therefore are we told in Galatians 4:4, that He was “made under the law.” And so we hear Him expressing, in view of His future incarnation, His intention to fulfil it, “I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart” (Psa 40:8). He knew and loved the Law, and came into this world to honour it by submission to its authority. From the beginning, He was ever ready to recognize His obligations to God. As a boy, He was “subject unto” His parents (Luk 2:51). By receiving baptism at the hands of His forerunner, He solemnly and publicly dedicated Himself unto the service of His Father, saying, “Thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness” (Mat 3:15); and His whole conduct

was a commentary upon His declaration, "I must work the works of him that sent me" (Joh 9:4). Though He were a Son, "yet learned he obedience" (Heb 5:8).

Third, it was required of Him that He should suffer and undergo what in justice was due to those He came to deliver. Satisfaction had to be made for their sins. The glory of the Gospel is that, "Grace reigns through righteousness" (Rom 5:21). Salvation is of grace, but this grace comes to us in a way of *righteousness*. It is grace to us, but it was brought about in such a way that all our debt was paid. Thus God is seen to be both just and merciful—just in requiring full compensation to His broken Law—merciful because it was He, and not the sinner, who furnished the ransom. The redeemed are saved without any injury to justice. Now, Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world" as the Lamb whose precious blood was to be shed (1Pe 1:19-20). He had received "commandment" to lay down His life (Joh 10:18). Therefore was He "obedient unto death" (Phi 2:8), and hence, when the bitter cup which had been appointed was presented to Him, He said, "Not my will, but thine, be done."

III. The Promises the Father made the Son

The promises of the covenant may be distinguished into two classes—the one, those which immediately respected Christ, and the other, that which respected His elect. Let us consider the former first. In relation to Christ Himself, God promised to furnish him with all necessary *preparation for* the arduous work which He had undertaken to perform. Let the reader carefully consult Isaiah 11:2-3; 49:1-3. Again, the Father promised to support him *in* that work. That work was attended with such difficulties that created power, although unimpaired by sin, would have been totally inadequate to it. It was to be performed in human nature, and *that* had failed in an easier undertaking even when possessed of untainted innocence, and of faculties in all their freshness and vigour. Our Saviour was encouraged by the assurance of the divine presence and assistance (see Isaiah 42:1-7). Blessed is it to behold the Lord Jesus firmly depending upon those promises in the most trying occasions.

Once more, the Father promised to confer a glorious *reward* upon His Son's *accomplishment* of the work. He promised to invest him with honour and power (Psa 110:1; 89:27; 72:8). These promises were fulfilled after His resurrection from the dead, when God gave him a name above every name (Phi 2:9-11). He promised too to accomplish and secure the salvation of that people for whom He had obeyed, suffered, and died (see Isa 53:10-12). He would have an offspring who would arise to call him blessed, and rejoice in the wondrous benefits which He had purchased and procured for them.

Concerning the promises which respect the elect, they were made in the first instance *to Christ*, with whom alone God transacted in the Covenant of Grace. Those promises were made to the Surety, for the persons in whose favour they were to be performed had no actual existence, for that transaction took place before Genesis 1:1. A remarkable proof of this is found in Titus 1:2, "In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, *promised* [not simply "purposed"] before the world began." If eternal life was promised "before the world began," it follows that it must have been promised to Christ, who was then constituted the

federal Head of His people. "Eternal life" is *the* promise, including all others (see 1Jo 2:25). With Titus 1:2 should be carefully compared 11 Timothy 1:9.

IV. The Son's Acceptance of the Conditions

The covenant engagement into which our Saviour entered was entirely *voluntary* on His part. There existed no previous obligation, nor was there any authority by which He could be compelled to do it. As a divine Person, He was subject to no one and acknowledged no superior, "He thought it not robbery to be equal with God" (Phi 2:6). By a free action of His own will, He consented to execute that work which the Father had proposed to Him. Proof of this is found in Psalm 40:6, which takes us back to the servant of Exodus 21:5-6, who willingly relinquished his rights. So Christ freely and cheerfully undertook to do and suffer the will of His Father.

It is important to be clear upon and hold fast this point. Whatever was the will of the Father, was the will of the Son. Whatever the Father proposed, the Son consented to. If there are any verses in the New Testament which speak of the Father *sending* the Son, there are also many others which affirm His own voluntariness therein, "The Son of man is *come* to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luk 19:10), "Christ Jesus *came* into the world to save sinners" (1Ti 1:15), etc. His words, "I *delight* to do *thy* will, O my God" (Psa 40:8) for ever settle this point.

V. The Father's Acceptance of the Work Performed

When Christ had completed on earth the work which had been given Him to do, He "offered himself without spot to God" (Heb 9:14). The Lord God evidenced His acceptance of the Mediator's sacrifice, first, by preserving His body in the grave. With absolute trust the Saviour said, "Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psa 16:10). Nor did He. Second, by raising Him from the dead, "Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death" (Act 2:24). In bringing forth the crucified Saviour from the tomb, God showed to all created intelligences that He *was* well pleased with the work His incarnate Son had performed. Moreover, He was raised not as an act of grace or mercy, but "according to the spirit of *holiness*" (Rom 1:4). Thus, the death of Christ was the payment of His people's debt. His resurrection was God's receipt. Third, God evidenced His acceptance of Christ's mediatorial work by exalting His Servant-Son above all creatures (Phi 2:9-11).

VI. The Son's Claim to the Promised Reward

This is what Christ's present intercession on high consists of. It is not through strong crying and tears, in earnest pleadings and supplications, as in the days of His humiliation, but in *laying claim* to His rightful remuneration, namely, that God shall now save "unto the uttermost" all those for whom He acted as Surety. The whole of His high priestly prayer in

John 17 is to be regarded in *that* light. There, we behold the Mediator demanding the accomplishment of the whole compact and the fulfilment of all the promises which were made to him when He undertook to become a Saviour (Joh 17:1-4, 9, 12-16), concluding by saying, "Father, I *will* that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me" (verse 24).

In Psalm 2, there is a remarkable unfolding of our present theme, which is understood by very few of the Lord's people today. It contains a series of prophecies, which, like all others, are to receive a *double* fulfilment. We confine ourselves now to the original accomplishment of them. First, we behold the leaders of the Gentiles and the rulers of the Jews taking counsel together against JEHOVAH and against His Christ (Psa 2:1-3). This found its fulfilment at the cross, as Acts 4:25-28 plainly shows. Second, we have JEHOVAH's response (Psa 2:4-6)—His derision against them, His threat to visit them in wrath—which was fulfilled at the destruction of Jerusalem (Mat 22:7), and His exaltation of Christ (Psa 2:6). Third, we hear JEHOVAH saying, "I will *declare* the decree" (Psa 2:7), i.e. I will now make known, publish abroad, the mystery of the everlasting covenant. He owns Christ in resurrection (Act 13:33). Then, He says, "Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance," etc. (Psa 2:8). "Ask of me"—put in your claim for the fulfilment of that promise to which Thou art now justly entitled.

VII. *The Immutability of the Covenant*

From all that has been before us, it should be evident, beyond all possibility of contradiction, that the Covenant of Grace is entirely *unconditional* as far as man is concerned, for it was made long before he drew his first breath. The elect themselves cannot be a party to it, though their salvation was the purpose of it. How far, far below the glorious truth of God are the wretched thoughts and opinions of people today! The idea which now prevails is that Christ's death has merely made possible the salvation of men, that it has simply afforded sinners an opportunity of becoming reconciled to God. Instead, the death and resurrection of Christ were the ratification of an eternal agreement between the Father and the Son, which infallibly ensures the salvation of all named in it.

The covenant work of Christ not only gave full and final satisfaction to God for the failed responsibilities of His people, atoning for all their sins and securing a perfect righteousness for them, but it also procured for them the gift of the regenerating Spirit, and with Him, the gifts of repentance, faith, preservation, and glorification. God "*hath* blessed us with *all* spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Eph 1:3). When? When we believed? No, "*According* as he hath chosen us in him *before* the foundation of the world." That was not merely an election *to* those blessings, but an actual *bestowment* of them upon us in Christ, and this secures the actual communication of them to us now *through* Christ. In like manner, we are told, "Who hath saved us...according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began" (2Ti 1:9). The "grace" there is in addition to God's "purpose," and that "grace" *included* regenerating grace, justifying grace, sanctifying grace, believing grace, glorifying grace (compare 2Ti 1:2).

The salvation of God's elect is not left contingent on their repenting and believing, but is made certain by God's promise to Christ that He "*shall* see of the travail of his soul, and shall be *satisfied*" (Isa 53:11). And that promise is made good by giving the Holy Spirit to each of those for whom Christ fulfilled His covenant engagements. Though God's elect be yet in a state of nature, some of them dead in trespasses, wallowing in the mire of this world, yet has the Father assured His Son, "By the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth *thy* prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water (Zec 9:11). He acquired a legal right to their persons, and therefore, in His own appointed time, does God, by His Spirit, bring them forth on to resurrection ground. Assured of this, Christ declared, "Other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they *shall* hear my voice: and there *shall* be one fold, and one shepherd" (Joh 10:16).

How invincibly certain then is the salvation of every one for whom Christ covenanted! Each of them shall yet say with David, "He hath made with me [in Christ] an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and *sure*: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire" (2Sa 23:5).

COMING TO CHRIST

Part 4

IV. With the Will

The man within the body is possessed of three principal faculties: the understanding, the affections, and the will. As was shown in the first article, all of these were radically affected by the fall. They were defiled and corrupted, and in consequence, they are used in the service of self and sin rather than of God and of Christ. But in regeneration, these faculties are quickened and cleansed by the Spirit—not completely, but initially and continuously so in the life-long process of sanctification, and perfectly so at our glorification. Now each of these three faculties is subordinated to the others by the order of nature, that is, as man had been constituted by his Maker. In Genesis 3:6, we read, "The woman saw [perceived] that the tree was good for food [that was a conclusion drawn by the understanding], and that it was *pleasant* to the eyes [there was response of her affections], and a tree to be desired [there was the moving of the will]...she took [there was the completed action]."

Now the motions of divine grace work through the apprehensions of faith in the understanding, these warming and firing the affections, and they in turn influencing and moving the will. Every faculty of the soul is put forth in a saving "coming to Christ." "If thou believest with *all* thine heart, thou mayest"—be baptized (Act 8:37). "Coming to Christ" is more immediately an act of the will as John 5:40 shows, yet the will is not active toward Him until the understanding has been enlightened and the affections quickened. The Spirit first causes the sinner to perceive his deep need of Christ, and this by showing

him his fearful rebellion against God, and that none but Christ can atone for the same. Secondly, the Spirit creates in the heart a desire after Christ, and this by making him sick of sin and in love with holiness. Third, as the awakened and enlightened soul has been given to see the glory and excellency of Christ, and His perfect suitability to the lost and perishing sinner, then the Spirit draws out the will to set the highest value on that excellency, to esteem it far above all else, and to close with him.

As there is a divine order among the three Persons of the Godhead in providing salvation, so there is in the applying or bestowing of it. It was God the Father's good pleasure in appointing His people from eternity unto salvation that was the most full and sufficient *impulsive* cause of their salvation, and every whit able to produce its effect. It was the incarnate Son of God whose obedience and sufferings were the most complete and sufficient *meritorious* cause of their salvation, to which nothing can be added to make it more apt and able to secure the travail of His soul. Yet neither the one nor the other can *actually* save any sinner except as the Spirit *applies* Christ to it. His work becomes the *efficient* and immediate cause of their salvation. In like manner, the sinner is not saved when his understanding is enlightened and his affections fired. There must also be the act of the will, surrendering to God, and laying hold of Christ.

The order of the Spirit's operations corresponds to the three great offices of Christ the Mediator, namely, His prophetic, priestly, and kingly. As Prophet, He is first apprehended by the understanding, the truth of God being received from His lips. As Priest, He is trusted and loved by the heart or affections, His glorious person being first endeared unto the soul by the gracious work which He performed for it. As Potentate, our will must be subdued unto him, so that we submit to His government, yield to His sceptre, and heed His commandments. Nothing short of the throne of our hearts will satisfy the Lord Jesus.

"No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him" (Joh 6:44). This "drawing" is accomplished by the Spirit—first, in effectually enlightening the understanding; second, by quickening the affections; third, by freeing the will from the bondage of sin and inclining it toward God. By the invincible workings of grace, the Spirit turns the bent of that will, which before moved only toward sin and vanity, unto Christ. "Thy people," said God unto the Mediator, "shall be willing in the day of thy power" (Psa 110:3). Yet though divine power be put forth upon a human object, the Spirit does not infringe the will's prerogative of acting freely. He morally persuades it. He subdues it. He subdues its sinful intractability. He overcomes its prejudice, wins and draws it by the sweet attractions of grace.

The perfect consistency between the freedom of a regenerated man's spiritual actions and the efficacious grace of God moving him thereto is seen in 11 Corinthians 8:16-17. "But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord, he went unto you." Titus was moved to that work by Paul's exhortation, and was willing "of his own accord" to engage therein, and yet it was "God which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus" for them. God controls the inward feelings and acts of men without interfering with either their liberty or responsibility. The zeal of Titus was the spontaneous effusion of his own heart, and was an index to and element of his character. Nevertheless, God wrought in him both to will and to do of *His* good pleasure.

No sinner savingly “comes to Christ,” or truly receives Him into the heart, until the will freely consents (not merely “assents” in a theoretical way) to the severe and self-denying terms upon which He is presented in the Gospel. No sinner is prepared to forsake all for Christ, take up “the cross,” and “follow” Him in the path of universal obedience, until the heart genuinely esteems Him “the fairest among ten thousand,” and this none ever to do before the understanding has been supernaturally enlightened and the affections supernaturally quickened. Obviously, none will espouse themselves with conjugal affections to that person whom they account not the best that can be chosen. It is as the Spirit convicts us of our emptiness and shows us Christ’s fullness, our guilt and His righteousness, our filthiness and the cleansing merits of His blood, our depravity and His holiness, that the heart is won and the resistance of the will is overcome.

The holy and spiritual truth of God finds nothing akin to itself in the unregenerate soul, but instead, everything that is opposed to it (Joh 15:18; Rom 8:7). The demands of Christ are too humbling to our natural pride, too searching for the callous conscience, too exacting for our fleshly desires. And a miracle of grace has to be wrought within us before this awful depravity of our nature, this dreadful state of affairs, is changed. That miracle of grace consists in overcoming the resistance which is made by indwelling sin, and creating desires and longing Christward; and then it is that the will cries,

*“Nay, but I yield, I yield,
I can hold out no more;
I sink, by dying love compell’d,
And own Thee Conqueror.”*

A beautiful illustration of this is found in Ruth 1:14-18. Naomi, a back-slidden saint, is on the point of leaving the far country, and (typically) returning to her Father’s house. Her two daughters-in-law wish to accompany her. Faithfully did Naomi bid them, “Count the cost” (Luk 14:28). Instead of at once urging them to act on their first impulse, she pointed out the difficulties and trials to be encountered. This was too much for Orpah. Her “goodness” (like that of the stony-ground hearers, and myriads of others) was only “as a morning cloud,” and “as the early dew,” it quickly went away (Hos 6:4). In blessed contrast with this, we read that Ruth “clave unto her,” saying, “Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest I will go: and where thou lodgest I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God.”

What depth and loveliness of affection were here! What wholehearted self-surrender! See Ruth freely and readily leaving her own country and kindred, tearing herself from every association of nature, turning a deaf ear to her mother-in-law’s begging her to return to her gods (Ruth 1:15) and people. See her renouncing idolatry and all that flesh holds dear, to be a worshipper and servant of the living God, counting all things but loss for the sake of His favour and salvation. And her future conduct proved her faith was genuine and her profession sincere. Ah, naught but a miraculous work of God in her soul can explain this. It was God working in her, “Both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure” (Phi 2:13).

The relation between our understanding being enlightened and the affections quickened by God, and the resultant consent of the will, is seen in Psalm 119:34, “Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.” “The

sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is the devout reverence for the law and a reverent keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of His love, wisdom, holiness and majesty, and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith. The understanding operates upon the affections. It convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers. And then it reveals the majesty of the Lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before His supreme will. He alone obeys God who can say, 'My Lord, I would serve Thee, and do it with all my heart,' and none can truly say this till they have received, as a free grant, the inward illumination of the Holy Spirit" (Charles H. Spurgeon, 1834-1892).

Ere turning to our final section, a few words need to be added here upon 1 Peter 2:4, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone...ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." Has the sovereign grace of God inclined me to come unto Christ? Then it is my duty and interest to "abide" in Him (Joh 15:4)—abide in Him by a life of faith daily (Gal 2:20). It is in this way of continual coming to Christ that we are "built up a spiritual house" (1Pe 2:5). It is in this way that the life of grace is maintained, until it issues in the life of glory. Faith is to be always receiving out of His fullness "grace for grace" (Joh 1:16). Daily should there be the renewed dedication of myself unto Him and the heart's occupation with Him.

V. Tests

Unto those who never savingly "came to Christ," He will yet say, "Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels" (Mat 25:41). The contemplation of those awful words ought almost to freeze the very blood in our veins, searching our consciences, and aweing our hearts. But, alas, it is much to be feared that Satan will blunt their piercing force to many of our readers, by assuring them that *they have already* come to Christ, and telling them they are fools to doubt it for a moment. But, dear friend, seeing that there is no less than your immortal soul at stake, that whether you spend eternity in heaven with the blessed or in hell with the cursed, hinges on whether or not you really and truly "come to Christ," will you not read the paragraphs which follow with double care?

1. How many rest on their sound doctrinal views of Christ. They believe firmly in His deity, His holy humanity, His perfect life, His vicarious death, His bodily resurrection, His ascension to God's right hand, His present intercession on high, and His second advent. So too did many of those to whom James addressed his epistle, but he reminded them that, "The devils also believe and tremble" (Jam 2:19). Oh my reader, saving faith in Christ is very much more than assenting to the teaching of Scripture concerning Him. It is the giving up of the soul unto Him to be saved, to renounce all else, to yield fully unto Him.

2. How many mistake the absence of doubts for a proof that they have savingly come to Christ. They take for granted that for which they have no clear evidence. But, reader, a man possesses not Christ by faith, as he does money in a strong-box or title deeds of land which are preserved by his lawyer, and which he never looks at once in a year. No, Christ is as "bread" which a man feeds upon, chews, digests, which his stomach works upon

continually, and by which he is nourished and strengthened (Joh 6:53). The empty professor feeds upon a good opinion of himself rather than upon Christ.

3. How many mistake the stirring of the emotions for the Spirit's quickening of the affections. If people weep under the preaching of the Word, superficial observers are greatly encouraged. And if they go forward to the "mourners' bench" and sob and wail over their sins, this is regarded as a sure sign that God has savingly convicted them. But a supernatural work of divine grace goes much deeper than that. Tears are but on the surface, and are a matter of temperamental constitution—even in nature, some of those who feel things the most give the least outward sign of it. It is the weeping of the heart which God requires. It is a godly sorrow for sin, which breaks its reigning power over the soul that evidences regeneration.

4. How many mistake a fear of the wrath to come for a hatred of sin. No one wants to go to hell. If the intellect be convinced of its reality, and the unspeakable awfulness of its torments are in a measure believed, then there may be great uneasiness of mind, fear of conscience, and anguish of heart over the prospect of suffering its eternal burnings. Those fears may last a considerable time, yea, their effects may never completely wear off. The subject of them may come under the ministry of a faithful servant of God, hear him describe the deep ploughing of the Spirit's work, and conclude that he has been the subject of them, yet have none of that love for Christ which manifests itself in a life all the details of which seek to honour and glorify Him.

5. How many mistake a false peace for a true one. Let a person who has had awakened within him a natural dread of the lake of fire, whose own conscience has made him wretched, and the preaching he has heard terrified him yet more, then is he not (like a drowning man) ready to clutch at a straw? Let one of the false prophets of the day tell him that all he has to do is to believe John 3:16, and salvation is his, and how eagerly will he—though unchanged in heart—drink in such "smooth things." Assured that nothing more is required than firmly to believe that God loves him and that Christ died for him and his burden is gone, peace now fills him. Yes, and nineteen times out of twenty that "peace" is nothing but Satan's opiate, drugging his conscience and chloroforming him into hell. "There is no [true, spiritual] peace, saith my God, to the wicked," and unless the heart has been purified, no man will see God (Mat 5:8).

6. How many mistake self-confidence for spiritual assurance. It is natural for each of us to think well and hope well of ourselves, and to imagine with Haman, "I am the man whom the king delighted to honour" (Est 6:6). Perhaps the reader is ready to say, "That is certainly not true of me. So far from having a high esteem, I regard myself as a worthless, sinful creature." Yes, and so deceitful is the human heart, and so ready is Satan to turn everything to his own advantage, that these very lowly thoughts of self may be feasted on and rested on to assure the heart that all is well with you. The apostate king Saul began by having a lowly estimate of himself (1Sa 9:21).

7. How many make a promise the sole ground of their faith, and look no farther than the letter of it. Thus the Jews were deceived by the letter of the law, for they never saw the spiritual meaning of Moses' ministry. In like manner, multitudes are deceived by the letter of such promises as Acts 16:31, Romans 10:13, etc., and look not to Christ in them. They see that He is the jewel in the casket, but rest upon the superscription without, and never

lay hold of the Treasure within. But unless the *Person* of Christ be apprehended, unless there be a real surrendering to His lordship, unless He be Himself received into the heart, then believing the letter of the promises will avail nothing.

The above paragraphs have been written in the hope that God may be pleased to arouse some empty professors out of their false security. But lest any of Christ's little ones be stumbled, we close with an excerpt from John Bunyan's (1628-1688), *Come and Welcome to Jesus Christ*. "How shall we know that such men are coming to Christ? Answer: Do they cry out at sin, being burdened with it, as an exceedingly bitter thing? Do they fly from it, as from the face of a deadly serpent? Do they cry out of the insufficiency of their own righteousness, as to justification in the sight of God? Do they cry out after the Lord Jesus to save them? Do they see more worth and merit in one drop of Christ's blood to save them, than in all the sins of the world to damn them? Are they tender of sinning against Jesus Christ? Do they favour Christ in this world, and do they leave all the world for His sake? And are they willing (God helping them) to run hazards for His name, for the love they bear to Him? Are His saints precious to them? If these things be so, these men *are* coming to Christ."

HEART WORK

Part 4

"God is not the author of confusion" (1Co 14:33). No, the devil causes that, and he has succeeded in creating much in the thinking of many by confounding the "heart" with the "nature." People say, "I was born with an evil heart, and I cannot help it." It would be more correct to say, "I was born with an evil nature, which I am responsible to subdue." The Christian needs clearly to recognize that *in addition to* his two "natures"—the flesh and the spirit—he has a heart which God requires him to "keep." We have already touched upon this point, but deem it advisable to add a further word there. I cannot change or better my "nature," but I may and must my "heart." For example, "nature" is slothful and loves ease, but the Christian is to redeem the time and be zealous of good works. Nature hates the thought of death, but the Christian should bring his heart to desire to depart and be with Christ.

The popular religion of the day is either a head or a hand one. That is to say, the labouring to acquire a larger and fuller intellectual group of the things of God or a constant round of activities called, "Service for the Lord." But the *heart* is neglected! Thousands are reading, studying, taking "Bible courses," but for all the *spiritual* benefits their souls derive, they might as well be engaged in breaking stones. Lest it be thought that such a stricture is too severe, we quote a sentence from a letter recently received from one who has completed no less than eight of these "Bible study courses." "There was nothing in that 'hard work' which ever called for self-examination, which led me really to know God, and appropriate the Scriptures to my deep need." No, of course there was not! Their

compilers—like nearly all the speakers at the big “Bible conferences”—studiously avoid all that is unpalatable to the flesh, all that condemns the natural man, all that pierces and searches the conscience. Oh, the tragedy of this *head* “Christianity.”

Equally pitiable is the *hand* religion of the day, when young “converts” are put to teaching a Sunday school class, urged to “speak” in the open air, or take up “personal work.” How many thousands of beardless youths and young girls are now engaged in what is called, “Winning souls for Christ,” when *their own* souls are spiritually starved! They may “memorize” two or three verses of Scripture a day, but that does not mean their souls are being fed. How many are giving their evenings to helping in some “mission,” when they need to be spending the time in “the secret of the Most High”! And how many bewildered souls are using the major part of the Lord’s day in rushing from one meeting to another instead of seeking from God that which will fortify them against the temptations of the week! Oh, the tragedy of this *hand* “Christianity.”

How subtle the devil is! Under the guise of promoting growth in “the knowledge of the Lord,” he gets people to attend a ceaseless round of meetings, or to read an almost endless number of religious periodicals and books. Or under the pretence of “honouring the Lord,” by all this so-called “service,” he induces the one or the other to *neglect* the great task which *God* has set before us—“Keep thy heart with all diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). Ah, it is far easier to speak to others than it is constantly to use and improve all holy means and duties to preserve the soul from sin, and maintain it in sweet and free communion with God. It is far easier to spend an hour reading a sensational article upon “the signs of the times,” than it is to spend an hour in agonizing before God for purifying and rectifying grace!

This work of keeping the heart is of *supreme importance*. The total disregard of it means that we are mere formalists. “My son, give me thine heart” (Pro 23:26). Until *that* be done, God will accept nothing from us. The prayers and praises of our lips, the labour of our hands, yea, and a correct outward walk, are things of no value in *His* sight while the heart be estranged from Him. As the inspired apostle declared, “Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not *love*, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge: and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not *love*, I am nothing: And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not *love*, it profiteth nothing” (1Co 13:1-3). If the heart be not right with God, we cannot *worship* Him, though we may go through the form of it. Watch diligently, then, your love for *Him*.

God cannot be imposed upon, and he who takes *no* care to order his heart aright before Him is a hypocrite. “And they come unto thee as the people cometh, and they sit before thee as my people, and they hear thy words, but they will not do them; for with their mouth they show much love, *but their heart* goeth after their covetousness. And, lo, thou art unto them as a very lovely song of one that hath a pleasant voice, and can play well on an instrument” (Eze 33:31-32). Here are a company of formal hypocrites, as is evident from the words, “as my people”—like them, but not of them. And what constituted them impostors? Their outside was very fair—high professions, reverent postures, much

seeming delight in the means of grace. Ah, but their *hearts* were not set on God, but were commanded by their lusts, went after covetousness.

But lest a real Christian should infer from the above that He is a hypocrite too, because many times his heart wanders, and he finds—strive all he may—that he cannot keep his mind stayed upon God when praying, reading His Word, or engaged in public worship, to him we answer that the objection carries its own refutation. You say, “Strive all I may.” Ah, if you *have*, then the blessing of the upright is yours, even though God sees well to exercise you over the affliction of a wandering mind. There remains still much in the understanding and affections to humble you, but if you are *exercised* over them, strive against them, and *sorrow over* your very imperfect success, then that is quite enough to clear you of the charge of reigning hypocrisy.

The keeping of the heart is supremely important because, “out of it are the issues of life” (Pro 4:23). It is the source and fountain of all vital actions and operations. The heart is the warehouse, the hand and tongue are but the shops. What is in *these* comes from *thence*—the heart contrives and the members execute. It is in the heart that the principles of the spiritual life are formed, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil” (Luk 6:45). Then, let us diligently see to it that the heart be well stored with pious instruction, seeking to increase in grateful love, reverential fear, hatred of sin, and benevolence in all its exercises, that from within these holy springs may flow and fructify our whole conduct and conversation.

This work of keeping the heart is *the hardest of all*. “To shuffle over religious duties with a loose and heedless spirit will cost no great pains, but to set thyself before the Lord, and tie up thy loose and vain thoughts to a constant and serious attendance upon Him—this will cost something! To attain a facility and dexterity of language in prayer, and put thy meaning into apt and decent expressions, is easy. But to get thy heart broken for sin whilst thou art confessing it, be melted with free grace, whilst thou art blessing God for it, be really ashamed and humbled through the apprehensions of God’s infinite holiness, and to *keep* thy heart in *this* frame, not only in, but after duty, will surely cost thee some groans and travailing pain of soul. To repress the outward acts of sin, and compose the external acts of thy life in a laudable and comely manner, is no great matter—even carnal persons by the force of common principles can do this. But to kill the root of corruption within, to set and keep up a holy government over thy thoughts, to have all things lie straight and orderly in the heart, this is *not easy*” (John Flavel, 1630-1691).

Ah, dear reader, it is far, far easier to speak in the open air than to uproot pride from your soul. It calls for much less toil to go out and distribute tracts than it does to cast out of your mind unholy thoughts. One can speak to the unsaved much more readily than he can deny self, take up his cross daily, and follow Christ in the path of obedience. And one can teach a class in the Sunday school with far less trouble than he can teach himself how to strengthen his own spiritual graces. To keep the heart with all diligence calls for frequent examination of its frames and dispositions, the observing of its attitude towards God, and the prevailing directions of its affections, and that is something which no empty professor can be brought to do! Give liberally to religious enterprises he may, but give himself unto the searching, purifying and keeping of his heart, he will not.

This work of keeping the heart is *a constant one*. “The keeping of the heart is such a work as is never done till life be done. This labour and our life end together. It is with a Christian in this business, as it is with seamen that have sprung a leak at sea. If they tug not constantly at the pump, the water increases upon them, and will quickly sink them. It is in vain for them to say the work is hard, and we are weary. There is not time or condition in the life of a Christian which will suffer an intermission of this work. It is in the keeping watch over our hearts, as it was in the keeping up of Moses’ hands, while Israel and Amalek were fighting below (Exo 17:12). No sooner do Moses’ hands grow heavy and sink down, but Amalek prevails. You know it cost David and Peter many a sad day and night for intermitting the watch over their own hearts but a few minutes” (J. Flavel).

Having sought to show that the keeping of the heart is the great work assigned the Christian, in which the very soul and life of true religion consists, and without the performance of which all other duties are unacceptable to God, let us now point out some of the corollaries and consequences which necessarily follow from this fact.

1. The labours which many have taken in religion are lost. Many great services have been performed, many wonderful works wrought by men, which have been utterly rejected by God, and shall receive no recognition in the day of rewards. Why? Because they took no pains to keep their hearts with God in those duties. This is the fatal rock upon which thousands of vain professors have wrecked to their eternal undoing—they were diligent about the externals of religion, but regardless of their hearts. How many hours have professors spent in hearing, reading, conferring, and praying, and yet, as to the supreme task God has assigned, have done nothing. Tell me, vain professor, when did you shed tears for the coldness, deadness, and worldliness of your heart? When did you spend five minutes in a serious effort to keep, purge, improve it? Think you that such an easy religion can save you? If so, we must *inverse* the words of Christ and say, “Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth unto life, and many there be that go in thereat.”

2. If the keeping of the heart be the great work of the Christian, then how few *real* Christians are there in the world. If every one who has learned the dialect of Christianity and can talk like a Christian, if every one who has natural gifts and abilities and who is helped by the common assisting presence of the Spirit to pray and teach like a Christian, if all who associate themselves with the people of God, contribute of their means to His cause, take delight in public ordinances, and pass as Christians were real ones, then the number of the saints would be considerable. But, alas, to what a little flock do they shrink when measured by *this* rule. How few make conscience of keeping their hearts, watching their thoughts, judging their motives. Ah, there is no human applause to induce men to engage in this difficult work, and were hypocrites to do so, they would quickly discover what they do not care to know. This heart work is left in the hands of a few hidden ones. Reader, are *you* one of them?

3. Unless real Christians spend more time and pains about their hearts than they have done, they are never likely to grow in grace, be of much use to God, or be possessors of much comfort in this world. You say, “But my heart seems so listless and dead.” Do you wonder at it, when you keep it not in daily communion with Him who is the fountain of life? If your body had received no more concern and attention than your soul, what state would it now be in? Oh, my brother or sister, has not your zeal run in the wrong channels?

God may be enjoyed even in the midst of earthly employments, “Enoch walked with God, and begat sons and daughters” (Gen 5:19-24)—he did not retire into a monastery, nor is there any need for you to do so.

4. It is high time the Christian reader set to this heart work in real earnest. Do not you lament, “They made me the keeper of the vineyards; but mine own vineyard have I not kept” (Song 1:6)? Then away with fruitless controversies and idle questions! Away with empty names and vain shows! Away with harsh censuring of others—turn upon yourself. You have been a stranger long enough to this work. You have trifled about the borders of religion too long. The world has deterred you from this vitally necessary work too long. Will you now resolve to look better after your heart? Haste you to your closet.

